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RAMESH PONNURU: ONE TERM FOR McCAIN?

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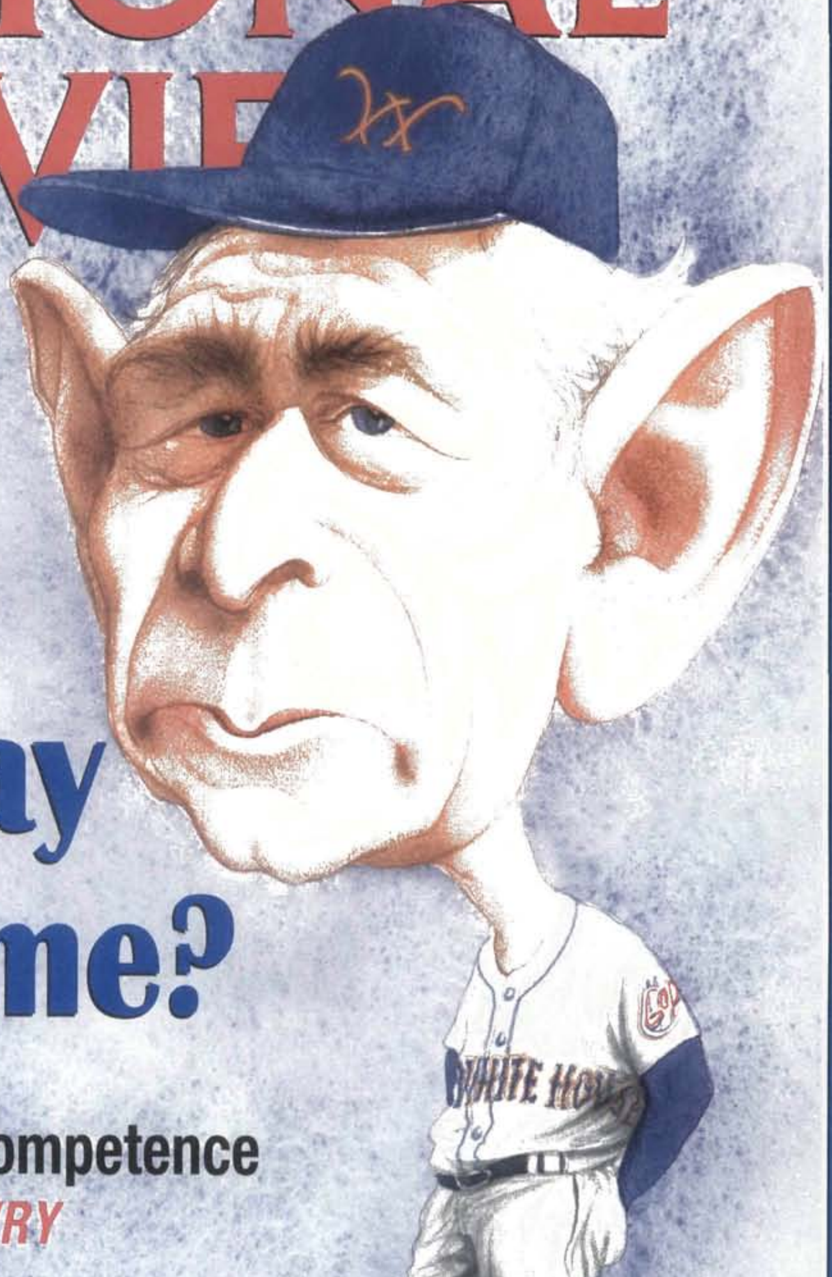

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The Roots of Bush's Competence Problem *RICHARD LOWRY*

Why the Libby Case Happened *BYRON YORK*

The Mess at the Justice Department *KATE O'BEIRNE*

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ON THE COVER

A Question of Competence

That "competence" would become a buzzword, not of Bush supporters but of his critics, is an unexpected turnabout from when the president entered office six years ago. Then, it was common to note the experience and gravitas of the Bush team. Now, the incompetence charge has gained such traction that even many Republicans buy it. *By Richard Lowry*

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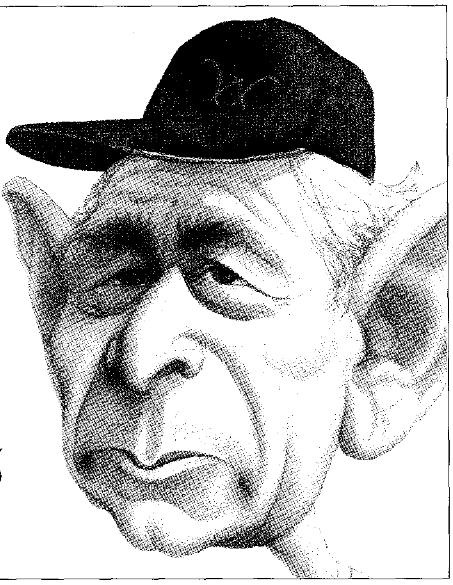

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letters to the editor

A VIEW OF OBAMA

At first glance, Richard Lowry seems to have Barack Obama figured out ("The Great Audacious Hope," March 5). Mr. Lowry rightly notes the centrality of Obama's vague yet comfortable message of hopefulness. He also properly calls Obama to task for his lack of detail and concrete policy positions, and the underlying arrogance in Obama's message that is perceived by those who do not emotionally or intuitively already accept what Obama is offering. However, when Mr. Lowry suggests that Obama is miscalculating the "very stuff of politics" and that the general voters will tire of Obama's repackaged, yet empty, Oprah-style liberalism, I think it is Mr. Lowry who underestimates Obama and not Obama who underestimates our political culture.

When I first heard Obama's smooth, folksy brand of redistributionist liberalism as his law-school classmate, I knew he was someone who could make the most radical policy prescription seem reasonable. (And at Harvard Law School they were sure radical.) Today, his pleasant, reasonable, comfortable, and non-threatening style transcends the "conflict and disagreement" that makes up ordinary politics. Obama is not ordinary, and he speaks emotionally and intuitively to a much larger group of people than Mr. Lowry suspects, inducing their acceptance and trust without the need to be specific.

What Mr. Lowry concludes is a weakness is actually a strength, as Obama's audaciously vague message of hope speaks to the frustration and cynicism of today's voters, many of whom will all too easily embrace him without really knowing or caring what he intends to do with the power he seeks.

William Ryan
Chicago, Ill.

A VIEW OF McCAIN

Ramesh Ponnuru's "The Coming McCain Moment" (March 19) reads more like a lawyer's brief for his client than a dispassionate analysis. In any event, this juror remains highly unconvinced.

Setting aside the conservativeness of his policy positions, McCain's personality and temperament are deeply flawed. The senator is sanctimonious, even when promoting egregiously bad ideas like McCain-Feingold, and often defends his positions by denigrating his critics' motives. He appears incapable of refraining from ill-considered public remarks for any length of time.

Further, the assertion that he is "hands down the best candidate" in terms of the War on Terror is dubious. Yes, his POW history gives him extraordinary credibility, but this is more than offset by his temperament, as well as his flawed judgment on key issues, e.g., closing Guantanamo "the first day I am president."

McCain is a true American hero with enormous personal courage, and he commands our great respect. But president? No.

Anthony C. Deutsch
Keswick, Va.

INNOCENTS ABROAD

The story involving senior citizens in Costa Rica (The Week, March 19) in which an armed mugger was killed by a 70-year-old American tourist was inspiring. It caused me to reflect, though, how fortunate these folks were to have been in Costa Rica at the time of the incident. Had they been in the U.S., this elderly hero would almost certainly have been charged with manslaughter and violating the civil rights of his attacker, with the attendant civil suits to follow.

James M. Shippen
Northfield, N.J.

ERRATUM

The words on your March 5 cover said "Not Enough: Why the miltary needs more of everything." What you had not enough of was letters—note the spelling of "military."

Barry Jackson
Gilbert, Ariz.

THE EDITORS RESPOND: We are mortfied and srry.

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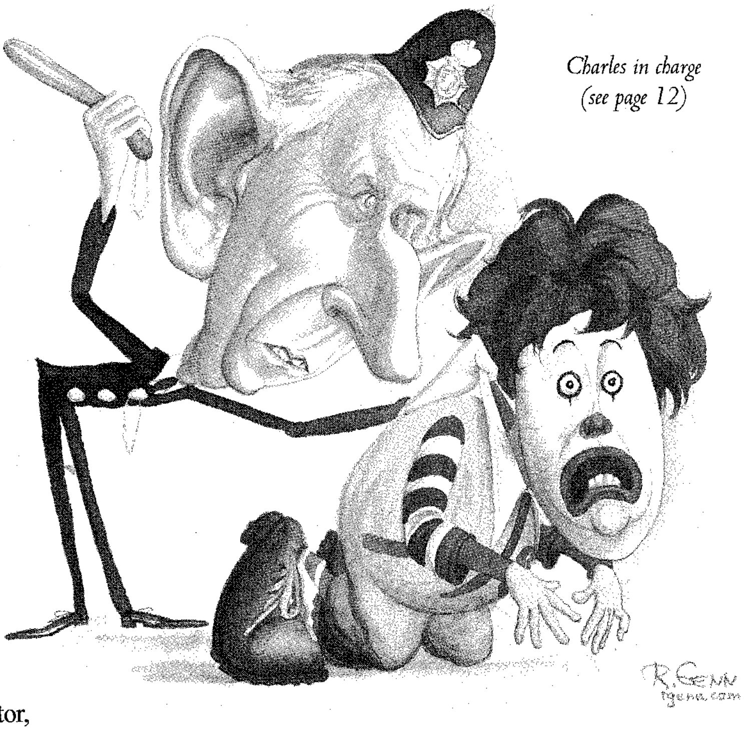
THE WEEK

■ Al Sharpton is refusing to endorse Barack Obama. If the senator gets really lucky, Jesse Jackson will refuse too.

■ Former senator Fred Thompson's recent media appearances confirm the judgment of Hollywood casting agents: He looks and sounds presidential. Some of Thompson's supporters want life to imitate art and are urging him to make a real-life run for the White House. He says he is "leaving the door open." During his eight years in the Senate, he built a solid conservative voting record, and on a recent *Fox News Sunday* he confidently handled a pop quiz on the issues with positions that would make him a conservative standard-bearer. *Roe* v. *Wade* is "bad law and bad medical science," he said; he opposes gun control and same-sex marriage, supports the surge of troops in Iraq, and would pardon Scooter Libby without delay. He speaks with an authority and conviction that Hollywood recognized and voters could reward. In addition to president of the United States, the 64-year-old's movie roles have included CIA chief, FBI director, and White House chief of staff. Now regularly appearing as the district attorney on NBC's *Law and Order*, Thompson may decide to leave the small screen for the big stage of a presidential run. Republicans could have another successful actor and talented politician to consider.



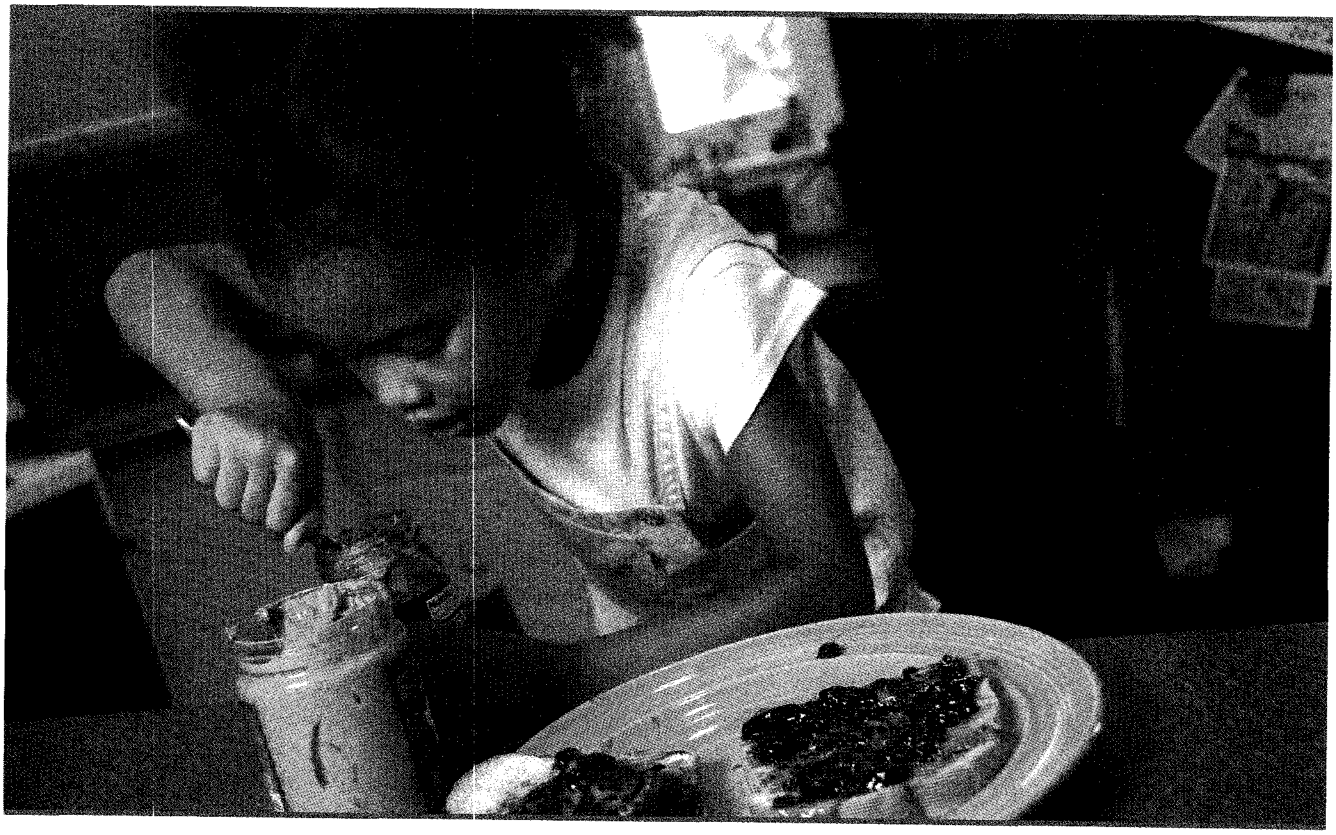
Charles in charge
(see page 12)

■ When Rudy Giuliani was inaugurated as New York's mayor in 1994, his son Andrew was a cheerful, chubby seven-year-old whose distracting antics on the stage upstaged his indulgent father on his big day. Now a 21-year-old college student, Andrew was again in the spotlight when he explained that he is estranged from his father owing to his parents' bitter divorce. He said he and his father haven't been speaking "for a decent amount of time," and noted, "There's obviously a little problem that exists between me and his wife." Rudy Giuliani wed his third wife in 2003, after an open courtship while still married, and the previously attentive father missed his son's high-school graduation two years later. Giuliani rightly noted that "these problems with blended families are challenges." And it's not uncommon for children to take sides in an angry dispute—"I got my values from my mother," Andrew pointedly declared. But Rudy Giuliani's very public, very messy personal life is uncommon in a presidential candidate, and that hyperactive little boy from happier times now adds to the baggage his father carries on the campaign trail.

■ "I think that Jesus would be disappointed in our ignoring the plight of those around us who are suffering and our focus on our own selfish short-term needs. I think he would be appalled, actually. That's why I believe that conservatism should be compassionate, should reach out to the unfortunate." Holy-roller pap from George W. Bush? Not really. The third sentence is made up, though in the style of GWB. The first two were spoken by John Edwards, in an interview with evangelical blogger David Kuo. Haven't read much about them? Could that be because Democrats can tote Bibles (Bill Clinton during the Lewinsky scandal), quote Scripture (Jimmy Carter, bringing peace to Palestine), even preach (the Rev. Jesse Jackson), without exciting hostile comment, but when Republicans or conservatives do it, they are "theocrats"? These are the rules of the road. Passing lane—and praying lane—to the left.

■ The Nevada Democratic party canceled a presidential debate it was co-sponsoring with Fox News. The reason offered—that Fox chairman Roger Ailes had made a low-blow joke about Barack Obama—was preposterous. (Ailes said, in a speech, "Barack Obama is on the move. . . . President Bush called Musharraf and said, 'Why can't we catch this guy?'"—clearly a joke about Bush, not Obama.) The real reason was that MoveOn.org had launched a campaign against the debate, endorsed by John Edwards, on the grounds that Fox is ritually unclean. So it is, for liberals. Is Fox biased? No more than CBS, CNN, MSNBC, (taxpayer-funded) NPR, the list goes on. But Fox leans in a way that liberals are unused to. They cannot

ROMAN GENN



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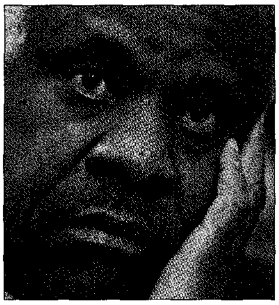
THE WEEK...

handle it, and, having so many other options to chose from, can afford to spurn it.

■ A jury of one's peers is normally guaranteed for the defendant in a case, not for witnesses in testimony. But Washington follows different rules, and in the Libby case the journalists who were called in droves had a colleague in the box, and sometimes even a friend. Juror Denis Collins had prior relationships with several key witnesses: "Bob Woodward was my boss at the *Washington Post* for three or four years," he wrote in his trial diary; Collins had twice conversed with reporter Walter Pincus at parties thrown by a mutual friend; and Tim Russert had been his neighbor, and had Collins over for neighborhood barbecues. Friendship does not an impartial juror make, and though the press was not on trial here, the veracity of their claims was. Collins should never have made it onto that jury, just as Scooter Libby should never have been on trial. But such is justice in our capital, where the Sixth Amendment holds no sway.


PAUL J. RICHARDS/AFP

■ Clarence Thomas made headlines recently when he accused the media of being "universally untrustworthy" in a rare interview he granted to *Business Week*. And count Justice Thomas correct, for the main thrust of the interview had been an attack on affirmative action, not a comment on the press. Affirmative action, said Thomas, implies a notion of a single black identity—"that somehow you can come from New York and Savannah and Massachusetts and somehow you're still all the same. That's bizarre, and it denigrates individuals." It's not so surprising the media ignored his attack, as Thomas can explain: "People have a model of what a black person should think." Dissenting voices must not be heard.

■ The scandal over the poor treatment of some wounded veterans at Walter Reed Army Medical Center claimed its third senior official when Army surgeon general Kevin C. Kiley joined Army secretary Fran Harvey and the hospital's commander in forced resignation. Multiple commissions, committees, and task forces have been launched to study the state of military medical care. We hope the fact that military medicine is a socialized system with the attributes of a bureaucratic monopoly won't escape their notice. The decrepit condition of some outpatient housing and the frustrating bureaucratic obstacles faced by injured veterans and their families are a disgrace. So too is the fact that in the past some of the Army's most vocal critics, like Sen. Hillary Clinton, were recommending a government-run health-care system for veterans and non-veterans alike.

■ An audit revealed that the FBI has improperly used "national security letters"—a kind of subpoena it can issue without the approval of a judge or prosecutor. Nothing more sinister than incompetence was afoot. In some cases, for example, agents transposed digits in phone numbers and ended up tracking the wrong people. Worse, the bureau did not keep good records on its NSL use, making it impossible for Congress to exercise oversight. Critics of the War on Terror say that the FBI shouldn't have the authority to issue these letters in the first place. Although we have supported most of the legal changes designed to aid the war, on this issue we are inclined to agree that the FBI's authority should be scaled back. Attorneys at the Justice Department should sign off before the FBI issues these letters. No compelling case has been made that this procedure would hinder the FBI's work. At the same time, however, concern over this issue should not become an excuse for scattershot attacks on the Patriot Act and other needed tools of the War on Terror.

■ Improving document security was one of the central recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. And for good reason: The hijackers had a total of 17 driver's licenses and 13 non-driver IDs, seven of them obtained by fraudulent means. In 2005, President Bush signed the Real ID Act, which sets federal minimum standards that state driver's licenses must meet by May 2008 if they are to be accepted for federal purposes (e.g., at airport screenings). But a revolt by the ACLU and a handful of state governments put this plan in jeopardy. The ACLU and some fellow-travelers on the right shrieked about the creation of a national ID card, and the states claimed that the federal government hadn't provided enough funds to comply with the law. The ACLU objection is risible: The act simply requires improved security standards of existing state licensing systems, and eschews a centralized approach. As for the funding, the states may have a point. The Bush administration has announced that it will extend the compliance deadline, and Congress should consider providing more funds. It should also stand firm against any attempt to gut Real ID.

■ Six residents of the District of Columbia challenged its gun law, which bans pistols in private houses and requires even licensed firearms, such as shotguns, to be kept locked or disassembled. In *Parker* v. *District of Columbia*, the D.C. Circuit of the United States Court of Appeals ruled in the plaintiffs' favor.

STILL SELMA'S FAVORITE

Obama got there first, which gave
The Missus such heartburn,
She, poof!, was Alabamy-bound,
Squawking like Arctic tern.
She blew the customary kiss;
He mouthed a wan Hello—
Still comfortably poised until
Hubby, like, stole the show.

—W. H. VON DREELE

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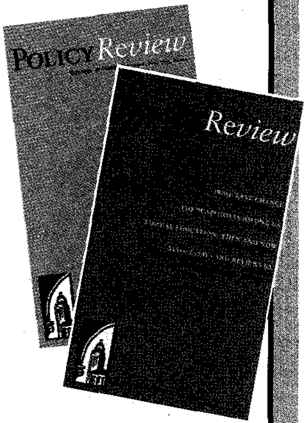

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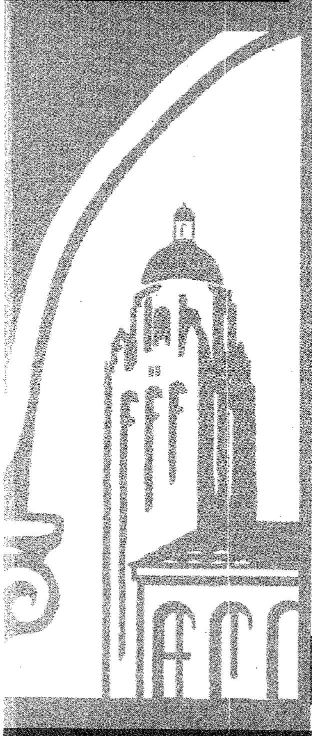

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In the new issue of *Policy Review*

Democracy in China

A long march through illusion

The reasons for democracy's slow boat to China are complicated: They range from American delusions to Chinese authoritarian resilience to Chinese nationalism. Far less complicated is the reality that, as the United States trumpets democracy worldwide as a strategic objective and a sign of human progress, China is unabashedly providing a counterexample. Successful democratization in China, therefore, will not only usher in freedom for 1.3 billion Chinese citizens but will also strike a blow against the stubbornness of authoritarianism worldwide. It is therefore vital for U.S. policymakers to examine China's success in resisting democratization, reassess the tools and assumptions of current democracy promotion efforts, and think of new ways to remove the roadblocks to freedom.

—Ying Ma

Israel's Lessons for U.S. Security Policy

Sixty years of coping with the worst sort of trouble

Since its founding in 1948, Israel has faced terrorism, insurgencies, and attacks from substate actors operating with non-Western goals and values, along with conventional wars and existential threats from aspiring nuclear nations such as Iraq and Iran. Israel's versatility and adaptability in successfully combating threats not only have defended the survival of the embattled nation but also made it an intriguing case study. As such, the Israel Defense Force's military actions have been — and are — a laboratory for methods, procedures, tactics, and techniques for the United States, which now faces the same Islamist adversaries across the planet.

—Thomas H. Henriksen

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THE WEEK...

The opinion, by Judge Laurence Silberman, held that the authors of the Second Amendment believed the "people possessed a natural right to keep and bear arms." The backstory of the amendment bears this out. William Blackstone, the 18th-century legal commentator, found the right to bear arms in "the natural right of resistance and self-preservation." The Second Amendment begins by invoking "well-regulated" militias, but if the intent was to stop there, the Framers, famously good writers, could have said so clearly. It's not as though D.C.'s gun laws do much good—137 of 169 murders in 2006 were committed with handguns. American legal history allows reasonable regulation of the right. D.C. lawmakers will have to think harder about what that means.

■ The National Nuclear Security Administration announced that it had selected a design for a new generation of nuclear warheads. That immediately threw a handful of congressional Democrats into a tizzy. Sen. Dianne Feinstein said she was "100 percent opposed," and Rep. Peter J. Visclosky, chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee responsible for

BOB KRIST/CORBIS

One, Vast College Campus

I'VE long thought there's a reason that libertarianism is so popular on college campuses. For many of us, the freest time of our lives was college. We seemed masters of our fate (particularly if we were lucky enough not to pay for school ourselves), free to make what seemed like all of the important choices for ourselves, from drugs to sex to satisfying our intellectual interests. Of course, this freedom was and is a mirage. An informal coalition of parents, taxpayers, administrators, cafeteria workers, janitors, security officers, regulators, professors, and others work behind the scenes or pay the bills so that kids can feel this sense of consequence-free liberty.

Last December, Brink Lindsey, a scholar at the libertarian Cato Institute, wrote a fascinating *New Republic* essay calling for a new fusionism between progressives (or liberals, if you prefer) and libertarians. Basically, Lindsey wants liberals to be libertarian on economics the way they're laissez-faire on culture. Put another way, he wants liberals to be libertarians. To which conservatives responded—including yours truly in these pages—"Don't we all?"

Responding to Lindsey, I noted that while libertarians constantly complain that conservatives have become too authoritarian and "theocratic," the truth is that libertarians have been "growing" too. Whereas they used to be obsessed with shrinking government, they're now increasingly concerned with expanding personal choices. Philosophically this represents a change from the classically liberal emphasis on "negative liberty" (restricting intrusions of the state) to the more progressive focus on "positive liberty" (giving people the opportunities and stuff they want or need to feel that they've realized their potential). At first, my point was greeted with considerable skepticism, but it's rapidly becoming conventional wisdom. Tyler Cowen, an eminent libertarian economist at George Mason University, recently wrote in a Cato Institute discussion, "We should embrace a world with growing wealth, growing positive liberty, and yes, growing government. We don't have to favor the growth in government per se, but we do need to recognize that sometimes it is a package deal."

This might have seemed like heresy not long ago. After all, it took decades for conservatives and libertarians to stop calling Irving Kristol a socialist for advocating a very limited welfare state, concerned primarily with things like old-age pensions. But the immense prosperity of the West has changed the political culture. As Charles Murray put it in a speech to the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, "Politicians around the world are getting better and better at doling out the amounts and types of freedom that will keep their economies growing without seriously interfering with the intrusiveness of government. Meanwhile, electorates that are increasingly wealthy are less energized by economic arguments for limited government." In short, prosperity allows people to design their own lifestyles, to pick their own cultures as if they were campus clubs.

When you look at Europe, Canada, and parts of, say, California, you can see this sort of "libertarianism" at work. The desire is to create one, vast college campus at the End of History, where it's against the rules to be mean to anybody, you have to recycle, and there are strict rules on parking, but otherwise you can do anything that floats your boat. Government is there to make sure you don't OD in the dorm but have access to an abortion at the clinic. There's actually much to recommend this worldview and I don't mean to be overly dismissive. But libertarians shouldn't complain anymore when they're called "sophomoric."

—JONAH GOLDBERG

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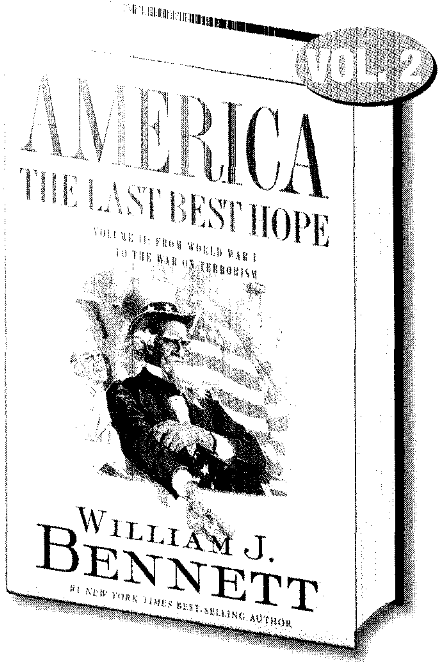
—William J. Bennett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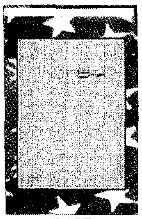
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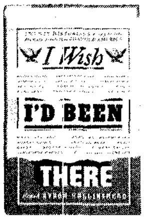
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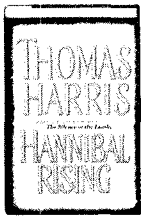
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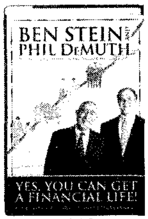
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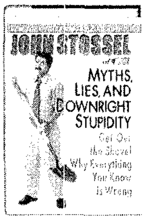
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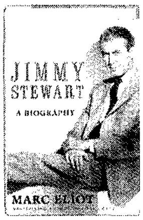
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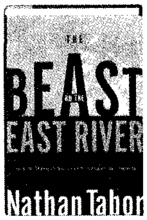
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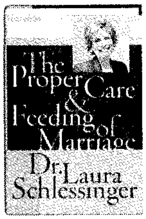
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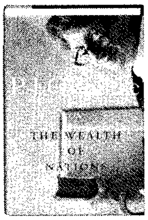
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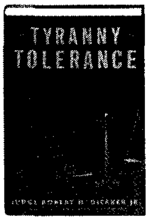
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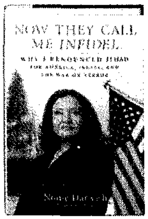
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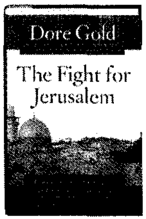
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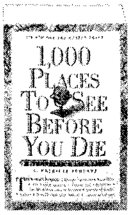
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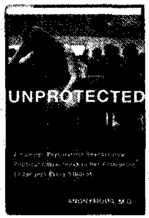
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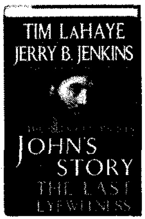
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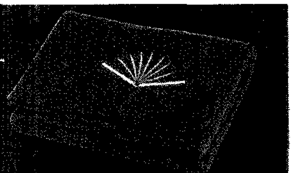

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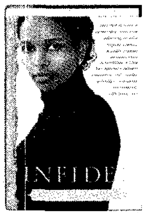

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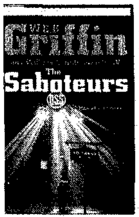
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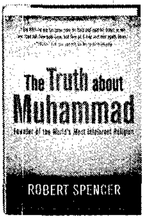
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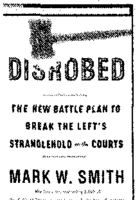
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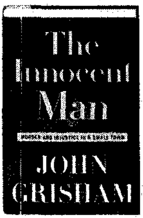
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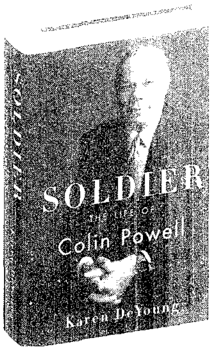
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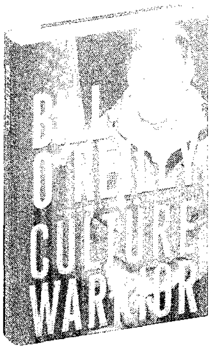
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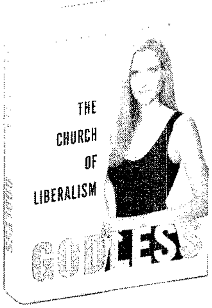
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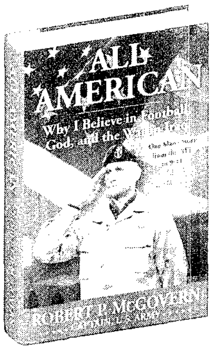
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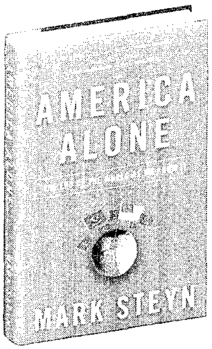
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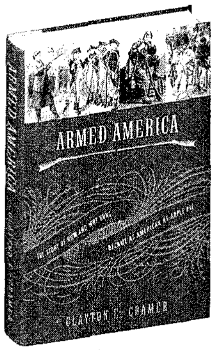
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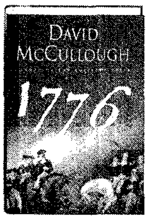
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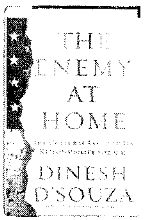
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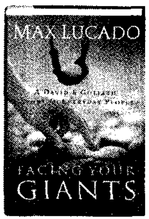
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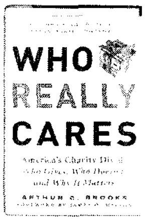
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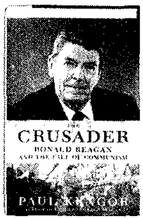
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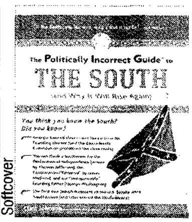
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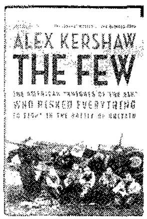
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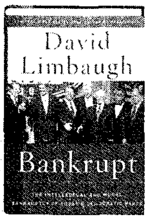
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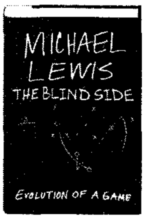
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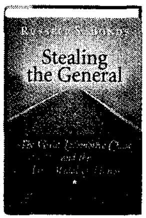
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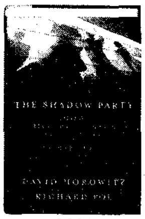
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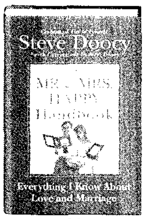
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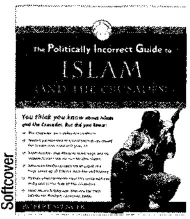
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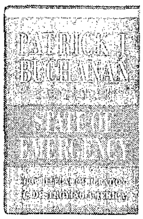
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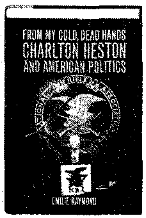
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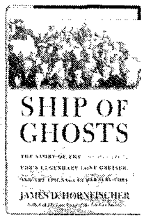
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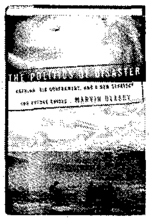
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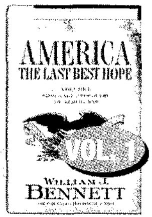
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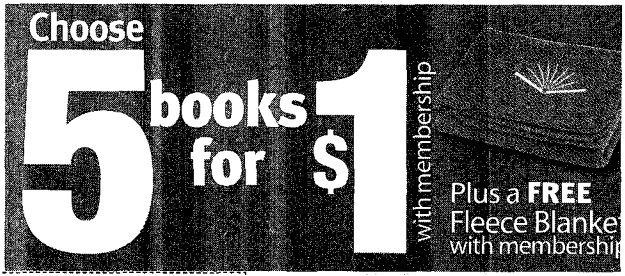
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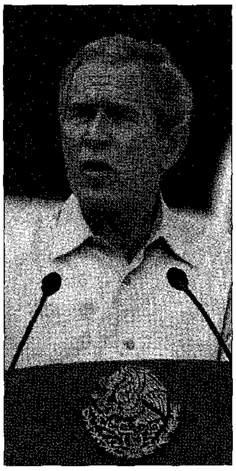
THE WEEK...

funding nuclear weapons, demanded that the Bush administration justify the need for a new warhead. But the need isn't so hard to see. The current stockpile of roughly 6,000 warheads is decades old. The new warheads will be based on an existing design, but improved with security features that reduce the likelihood of accidental or unauthorized detonation. They will not need to be tested prior to deployment, and will not increase the size of the U.S. arsenal, which is to be reduced to 2,200 warheads or fewer by 2012. The end of the Cold War did not eliminate the need for a strategic deterrent. It's only common sense to make sure that ours is in good shape.

■ The deadliest fire in New York City since 9/11 ripped through a house in the Bronx, killing ten people in two immigrant families from Mali—five children from one family, the mother and all four of her children in another. Their community mourns, and New Yorkers have responded with their accustomed generosity. One nagging detail emerged from coverage of the tragedy. Manthia Magassa, mother of the five dead children, was one of two wives of her husband Moussa Magassa. Aisse Magassa, the other wife, and her four children, lived on a different floor; all survived. It was wrong for Mitt Romney's great-grandfather to have multiple wives; it is still wrong for Mr. Magassa. Conservative supporters of open immigration say, not to worry, immigrants can always be assimilated. So they have been, historically. But the job becomes harder when raw numbers are high, and when such controls as exist are routinely flouted.

■ The president, in Latin America, made the case against Hugo Chávez and his Castroite socialism. In the 1980s and '90s, the region turned to "neoliberalism," a kind of elite version of free-market economics, and then rejected it because it did not do enough for the poor. Bush argued that the proper remedy is "capitalism for the campesinos." The United States can do its part to foster development in Latin America by moving forward on free trade—if, that is, this Congress is not as hostile to Bush and free trade as Chávez himself is.



LARRY DOWNING/REUTERS

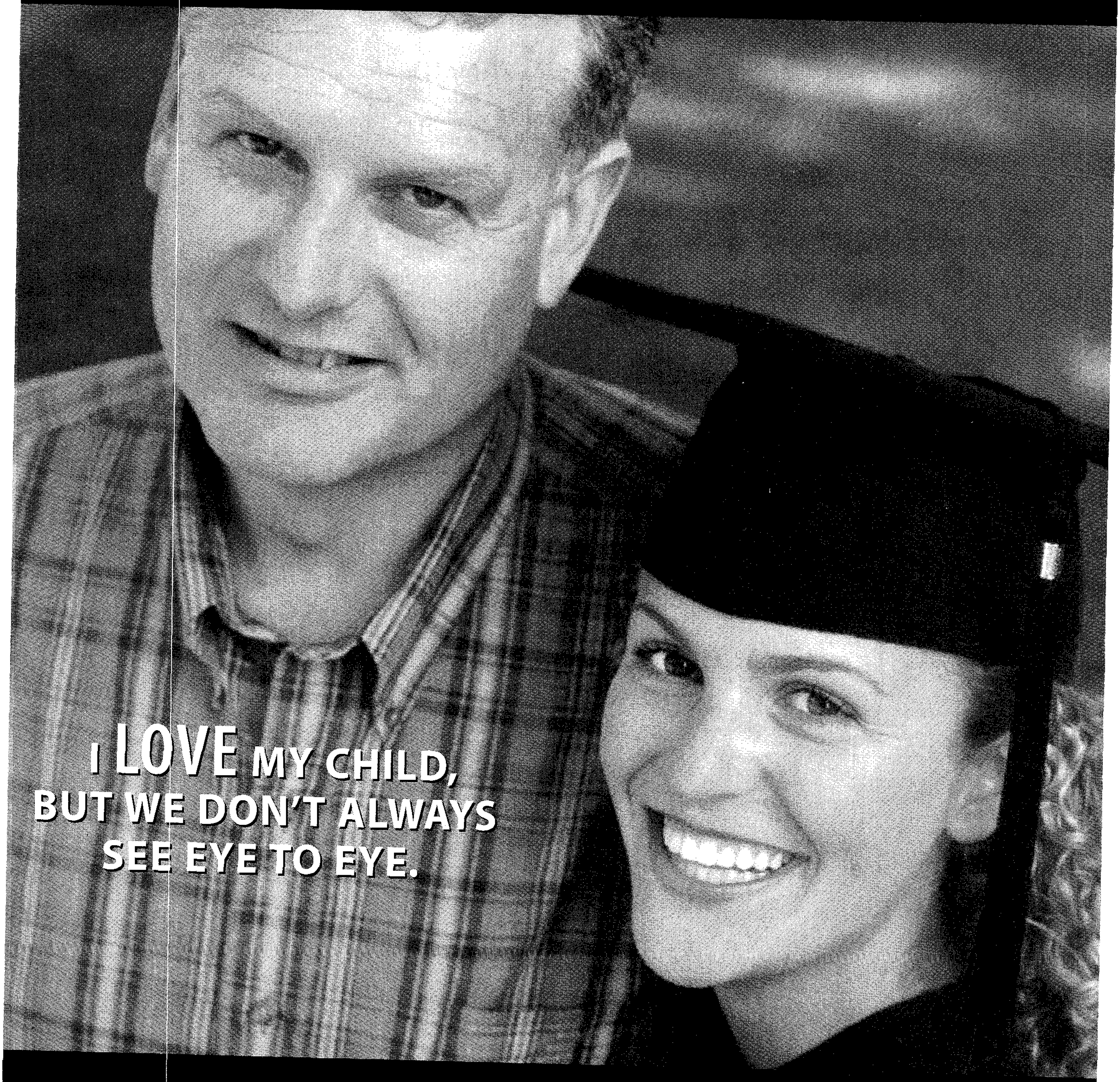
■ On his trip, Bush announced a deal to share alternative-fuel-development technology with Brazil, the world's leading producer of ethanol. Brazil's ethanol, made from sugar cane, uses cropland far more efficiently than the corn-based ethanol produced in the U.S. But it's not clear that the U.S. should emulate the Brazilian model. Brazil's warm climate is far more suited to growing sugar cane, and ethanol's 40 percent share of the country's fuel market—which would cover only about 3 percent of the much larger U.S. fuel market—is largely the result of decades of heavy government intervention in the energy sector. A better plan would be for Bush to do away with the current 54 cent per gallon tariff on imported ethanol and let Americans reap the rewards at the pump. Unfortunately, this option is strongly opposed by farm-state legislators whose corn-growers benefit from the tariff, and the administration has made clear that it is not going to leave this subsidy behind.

■ Journalists working on Russian issues have a scary way of being found dead. Some are shot down, like Anna Politkovskaya or the American Paul Klebnikov, and some are poisoned like Alexander Litvinenko. In Moscow, Ivan Safronov is the latest journalist to die, falling to his death from the fourth floor of his apartment building. Fell, or was pushed? Accident, or orders? Safronov was a well-informed defense correspondent for *Kommersant*, virtually the only newspaper that President Vladimir Putin has not yet muzzled. He was working on a story about missile sales to Syria. Trying to choke him off, Russian authorities were threatening Safronov with a criminal investigation, and he'd been telling colleagues of his fears. As the old KGB used to put it, any fool can commit a murder, but it takes an artist to commit a suicide.

■ If you're thrown in jail for calling the leader of your country a dictator, at least no one can say you're a liar. Abdel Kareem Solimann, a 22-year-old Egyptian, has been sentenced to four years in prison for insulting the president of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, and Islam as well. He wrote his "insults"—known as "criticisms" in free countries—on his blog, where he spoke in defense of women's rights, criticized his university, and so on. About an attack by Muslims on a Coptic church, he wrote, "Muslims revealed their true ugly face and appeared to all the world that they are full of brutality, barbarism, and inhumanity." Solimann is the first Egyptian to be sentenced to prison for writings on his blog. An ominous landmark.

■ St. Petersburg, Fla., has been the rather unlikely setting for a summit of secular Muslims. Nothing like it has ever taken place anywhere in the world. Fourteen men and women signed a final statement of their aims. And not an anonymous 14 either, but people in the public eye, with access to the media and not afraid to express their opinion, even though this has drawn fatwas and death sentences down on most of them: Amir Taheri, once editor of Tehran's leading newspaper; Afshin Ellian, another Iranian and a professor of law; Ayaan Hirsi Ali, rejected from the Dutch parliament; Nonie Darwish and Ibn Warraq, who are both authors; Wafa Sultan, from Syria but now in Los Angeles and who on al-Jazeera television reduced a Muslim extremist to silence. Fourteen people in all, but what a roll call. Liberty, rationality, and tolerance, they declare, are the common moral heritage of us all. They hope that those of all faiths and none will be able to meet on equal terms. The Muslim world is waiting for them as once those under Communism waited for the Soviet dissidents.

■ Twenty-seven German Catholic bishops made a bridge-building trip to Israel. All went well, until Bishops Hanke, of Eichstätt, and Mixa, of Augsburg, compared the Palestinian



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THE WEEK...

town of Ramallah to the ghetto, meaning the Warsaw Ghetto, whose inhabitants were murdered by Germans of the Nazi persuasion in World War II. These bishops need a refresher course in homiletics. Unfortunately, they employ a trope, all too common in Europe and spreading in liberal circles here (cf. Jimmy Carter), in which Israel is equated with apartheid-era South Africa or worse, thus delegitimizing it. Such talk is historically obtuse and morally repellent; once upon a time, the language of dehumanization was prologue to the very deeds that prompt the bishops to build bridges now.

■ The Eurovision Song Contest ascended through the sphere of self-parody decades ago, and floats now in an alternate universe of bad taste far beyond the reach of criticism. Like Death in Arcadia, however, politics cannot be escaped, even in these remote, aethereal regions of kitsch. The Israeli entry for this year's show, which is to be held in Helsinki in May, bore the title "Push the Button," and is performed by an Israeli pop band named Teapacks. The song's lyrics, in English, French, and Hebrew, refer to unidentified "crazy rulers" who are going to "push the button." Croons the lead singer: "I don't want to die. I want to see the flowers bloom, don't want to go kapoot-kaboom." This song, sniffed Kjell Ekholm, one of the Finnish organizers, is "not appropriate for the competition." Ekholm is apparently concerned that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the, well, crazy ruler of almost-nuclear Iran, might take umbrage at the song and push the button on Helsinki. Waspish commentators recalled that Finland's own Eurovision entry for 1982, "Nuku Pommiin," was likewise about the threat of nuclear war. Back then, of course, the "crazy rulers" targeted by songwriters were in Washington, D.C., so that made it all right.

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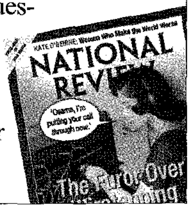
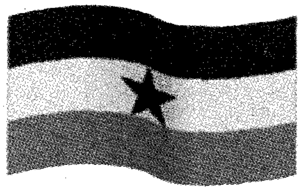
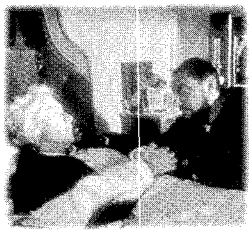


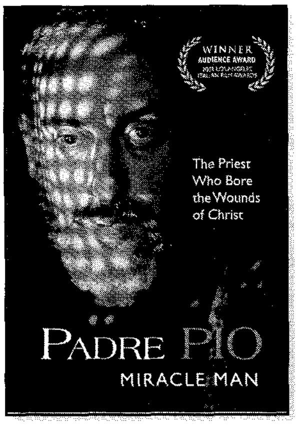
■ March 6 saw the 50th anniversary of Ghanaian independence. Formerly a British colony known as the Gold Coast, Ghana was the first nation in sub-Saharan Africa to pass from colonial rule to self-government. It was also one of the most prosperous and orderly of Britain's African possessions. Hopes for independent Ghana were high. Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, soon lowered them. A former Catholic seminarian and schoolteacher, Nkrumah attended historically black Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, where he took up the ideas of black nationalists Marcus Garvey and W. E. B. DuBois. By 1957 his head was stuffed with all the flapdoodle of the age: Pan-Africanism, socialism, Third Worldism, and so on. Like other members of the "non-aligned movement," he called in the KGB to organize Ghana's internal security, and was duly awarded the Lenin Peace Prize. Nkrumah was deposed by a coup while visiting Peking in 1966. Since then Ghana has lurched between bad government and worse, ending up as merely one of the less desperate black African nations, living by subsistence farming and foreign aid. It is, of course, all the fault of colonialism, as can be seen from the situation of other ex-colonial hellholes such as Singapore, Chile, and India.



■ Our very vague impression of the traditional Arab diet centers on figs, dates, and sheep's eyeballs. Surprising to learn, therefore, that the United Arab Emirates suffers from one of the world's highest rates of diabetes, with more than 20 percent of those aged 20 to 79 diagnosed with the illness, and a further 40 percent of the population considered "at risk." Prince Charles, who as well as being Prince of Wales is the Pharaoh of Food Faddishness, has located the cause of the problem. Visiting the U.A.E. for a public-health campaign, His Royal Highness was heard to ask one of the organizers: "You got anywhere with McDonald's? Have you tried getting it banned? That's the key." There are 25 McDonald's franchises in the U.A.E., which is to say about one per 100,000 of the population. Seems like a stretch to us. Is there no other possible causative factor? Have the sheep's eyeballs definitely been ruled out?

■ The Association of Social Anthropologists, an academic society over in the U.K., has ruled that the terms "primitive" and "Stone Age" may no longer be used to refer to peoples who are . . . technologically challenged. "Governments and other social groups . . . have long used these ideas as a pretext for depriving such peoples of land and their resources," fumed the association. This followed the use of the offending terms in a House of Lords debate about certain Botswana tribes. Representatives of those tribes chimed in with a letter to the left-wing *Guardian*: "If you call someone Stone Age or primitive, it sounds like you think they are inferior to you." Useless, of course, to point out that no thoughtful person ever did use the offending terms to refer to some*one*, only to some *societies*; and that a society that sustains itself by grubbing for roots with stone implements is indeed primitive and Stone Age, however admirable its individual members may be. All men are created equal, but all societies are not—not unless tribal despotism, slavery, ritual





PADRE PIO: MIRACLE MAN

The Priest Who Bore the Wounds of Christ

The life of the famous stigmatic monk, now a saint, Padre Pio, (1887-1968). This major feature film drama captures the Capuchin friar's intense faith and devotion, and deep spiritual concern for others, as well as his great compassion for the sick and suffering. It dramatizes the frequent attacks of the Devil on him, as well as the persecution he suffered at the hands of people, including those in the Church. The many miracles that he performed are also highlighted, as well as his deep humility, charity and sense of humor. Starring Italian actor Sergio Castellitto, and directed by Carlo Carlei, this is an outstanding feature film on the amazing life of this great saint. *Includes Collector's Booklet. Italian with English subtitles or English dubbed track.* **PPMM-M . . . 210 mins., DVD $24.95** DVD

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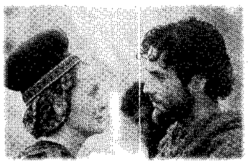

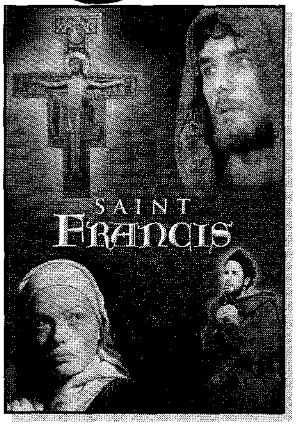

SAINT FRANCIS

Filmed on location in Assisi, this feature film vividly tells the story of this greatly beloved saint from childhood thru his death. Beautifully filmed with outstanding cinematography and fine acting talent, this film stars Italian actor Raoul Bova as Francis and was directed by the acclaimed fimmaker, Michele Soavi. Captured by the enemy as a soldier and put in prison, he has a life-changing experience that inspires him to abandon his riches and dedicate his life to living the Gospel in simplicity and charity towards all. He inspires his close friend Clare to imitate his radical lifestyle, and soon many other men join his new religious community that has had an incredible impact on the world ever since. *Includes Collector's Booklet. Italian with English subtitles or English dubbed track.*

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SAINT ANTHONY *The Miracle Worker of Padua*

This dramatic film about St. Anthony of Padua is the first major movie ever made about his amazing life. Shot on location in Italy with top-notch acting and glorious cinematography, this is an outstanding film about one of the most popular saints in the Christian history. Born into a Portugese noble family, Anthony defied his father's wishes by refusing to become a knight and instead choosing to follow the call of God. He eventually joined the Franciscans and became a follower of St. Francis of Assisi. He became renowned for his preaching and his miracles that won countless souls for Christ.This film portrays the power of his preaching, the holiness of his life, and the wonders of his miracles. He died at the age of thirty-six near the city of Padua shortly after working his last great miracle. Very soon after, he was canonized a saint. *Italian with English subtitles.*

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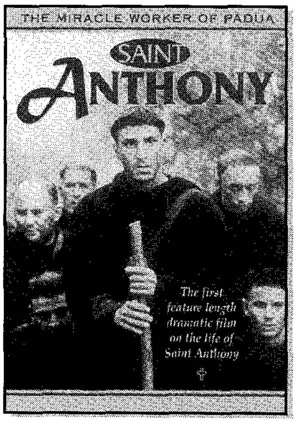
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sacrifice, and cannibalism are "just as good as" law, liberty, the Eucharist, and a diet that eschews human flesh.

■ From a diplomat's point of view, the trouble with representing a pariah nation is, you don't get invited to many parties, and so have time to kill. The devil being a well-known employer of idle hands, mischief follows. This seems the most charitable explanation for a string of misdemeanors by Israeli diplomats. The other day, Tzuriel Refael, Israel's ambassador to El Salvador, was found in the embassy compound, bound and gagged, wearing nothing but some minimalist sado-masochistic accessories. Refael was able to identify himself to police, though only after a rubber ball had been removed from his mouth. This follows last year's recall of the Israeli ambassador to Australia, who had publicly observed that Israel and Australia are kin because both are located in Asia yet their peoples don't have "yellow skin and slanted eyes." Before that was the 2005 scandal involving a member of Israel's mission in Brazil, who published pornographic pictures on the Internet. And before *that*, in 2000, was the case of Israel's ambassador to France, who died from a heart attack in a Paris hotel room with a woman not his wife. For goodness' sake, give these guys something to *do*.

■ The municipality of Santa Monica in Los Angeles County is the setting for the latest chapter in the endless war between, on one hand, the need to control animal pests, and on the other, the pestiferous legions of animal-rights activists. The pests in this case—the animal pests, that is—are squirrels, cute enough to look at, but potential carriers of, amongst other hazards, rabies and bubonic plague. The squirrels of Santa Monica have been reproducing themselves at an unacceptable rate. City fathers have come up with a plan to inject the little nuisances—that is, the squirrels, again—with an immuno-contraceptive vaccine that will limit their sexual growth. Female squirrels will no longer ovulate; males will no longer develop testes. The animal-rights folk are of course outraged. In a way, we grudgingly see their point. After all, what would a squirrel be without his nuts?

■ Mario Chanes de Armas was a revolutionary, sailing with Fidel and Che on the *Granma*. He was caught and jailed by Batista. Once the revolution succeeded, he happily resumed his life. But he soon landed back in jail—because he was a freedom-lover, never wanting Communism or any other form of tyranny. Interestingly, Castro jailed him on the same charges Batista had. And Chanes sat in prison for 30 years, six of them in solitary confinement (no window, barely enough room to stand up). As the *Financial Times* said, Chanes was "the longest-serving political prisoner in the western hemisphere," spending longer in jail than Nelson Mandela. Mandela's case was known, worried over, and agitated about worldwide. But, as the *FT* said, "the stories of Chanes and his fellow Cuban political prisoners received little publicity outside the Cuban exile community in Miami." The first thing Chanes did upon his release was visit the grave of his only son, Mario: Mario had been born after Chanes's jailing and had died at 22. Chanes was not allowed to attend the funeral because he refused to submit to a "reeducation" program. Reflecting on his decades in prison, Chanes said, "I watched men get shot, point blank, beaten with bayonets, arbitrarily pulled out and punished. But we were alone. The world didn't know." The *FT* reported that "Chanes never showed bitterness about his years in Castro's jails, saying they had never crushed his spirit." "After my release," Chanes said, "during my two years in Cuba, I realized that no one on the island was free anyway. I don't have feelings of hatred or vengeance. Vengeance is for cowards." There was a man. Mario Chanes de Armas died at 80 in Miami. R.I.P.

TIME
THE EAGLETON AFFAIR

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■ Former senator Thomas Eagleton of Missouri is remembered for one reason, and noteworthy for another. George McGovern tapped him to be his running mate in 1972, then dropped him from the ticket 18 days later when Eagleton admitted that he had received electroshock therapy for depression (he had not told McGovern's vetters). Before the final curtain, McGovern said he stood behind Eagleton "1,000 percent," adding a term to our political lexicon. But remember also: One of the reasons McGovern tapped Eagleton was that he was pro-life, and would balance the ticket. (Sargent Shriver, who replaced him as running mate, was also pro-life.) Twenty years later, Bob Casey, governor of Pennsylvania, could not give a pro-life speech at the Democratic convention. It would have been too shocking. Eagleton died, age 77. R.I.P.

■ Arthur Schlesinger Jr. won every honor that was within a historian's grasp, and some beyond (he was a special assistant in John F. Kennedy's White House). Schlesinger was the last bard of the New Deal consensus—a historical school that traced all good things to Jefferson and Jackson, then jumped ahead to the liberal activist presidents of the 20th century (Wilson, FDR, JFK). This interpretative scheme left a lot of questions unanswered: How did America ever become prosperous? How did it free its slaves? His career was cautionary—he was both a courtier and an eminence (the latter in part because he was the former). Neither role is a reliable adjunct to intellectual independence. But, to note the sweet with the bitter, he wrote clearly and well; he disdained left-wing fellow traveling early in his career, and multiculturalism at the end of it; and he suffered his fatal heart attack, age 89, at a family dinner in a Manhattan steak house. Way to go. R.I.P.

AT WAR

The 'Let's Lose Now' Caucus

Say at least this for the Democrats: They are beginning to find the courage of their profoundly mistaken convictions. They have moved from pretending that a nonbinding resolution against sending additional troops into Baghdad and Anbar Province is a serious blow against the war in Iraq to more strenuous attempts to handicap the prosecution of our fight there.

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Adolf Hitler.

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About Your Professor

Dr. Thomas Childers (Ph.D., Harvard University) is Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania. His teaching awards include the Ira T. Abrahams Award for Distinguished Teaching and Challenging Teaching in the Arts and Sciences, the Richard S. Dunn Award for Distinguished Teaching in History, and the Senior Class Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching.

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The House Appropriations Committee is set to take up a bill that would authorize $120 billion in additional spending to cover—among other things—the Iraq surge. Speaker Pelosi has known all along that refusing to fund the surge would be a political mistake, since it would open her Democrats to charges of defunding troops in the field. At the same time, her liberal base—and much of her House majority—wants the war stopped, now. The bill tries to keep them happy by setting deadlines for troop withdrawals. President Bush would be told to certify in July, and then again in October, that the Iraqi government had met certain political and military benchmarks. The bill calls for withdrawing U.S. troops within 180 days if these benchmarks aren't met (although Bush could waive them), and by September of 2008 no matter what. Senate Democrats, meanwhile, are working on a resolution that would call for withdrawal by March of 2008.

None of this goes as far as John Murtha's proposal for readiness requirements that would keep troops from deploying to Iraq, but it's still a brazen attempt by the legislature to occupy executive territory. Congress hasn't the power—and was not intended—to supervise the execution of military objectives. It can cut off funding, and the House bill inches in that direction. Yet it would not actually exercise Congress's power of the purse, since any actual defunding would require further legislation.

What cannot be doubted now is that the Democrats are the party of defeat in Iraq.

The bill shows the emptiness of Pelosi's claim that Democrats support U.S. troops even as they oppose the war. The message is: We don't believe you should be there; we don't believe you can win (even as the surge shows early signs of progress); so be warned that we'll pull the rug out from under you as soon as we can get away with it. Trying to avoid giving this impression, Pelosi has filled the bill with billions for veterans' health care, new armored vehicles, and military operations in Afghanistan. These gestures are on the order of buying a man a nice dinner after you have burned down his house.

Pelosi's leftward lurch might backfire. Moderate House Democrats—many of whom won election in conservative districts—are not ready to declare Iraq a failure and give up. Pelosi may not be able to bring them together with the House's unreformed liberals. If so, the bill will be defeated, and Pelosi will have succeeded only in alienating the moderate voters who delivered her speakership last fall. President Bush has promised to veto the bill if it reaches his desk. This would be a risk, since doing so might leave him without funds to fight the war; but the "let's lose now" caucus is probably not big enough—particularly in the Senate—to force that choice upon him.

Regardless of the outcome, what cannot be doubted now is that the Democrats are the party of defeat in Iraq. They think the war is lost and are determined to block any effort to prove otherwise on the ground. We believe that the war is still worth trying to win, and that defeat would have long-lasting and dire strategic consequences. But we're glad the public is getting to see the new majority's true colors.

POLITICS

Pardon Him

THE Left has developed an elaborate fantasy about Scooter Libby. The Bush administration supposedly leaked the fact that Valerie Plame worked for the CIA to retaliate for the public criticisms of the administration that her husband, Joseph Wilson, had made. Libby then—the story continues—lied to a grand jury in order to hide the evidence that his then boss, Vice President Cheney, had manipulated intelligence to manufacture a case for the Iraq War. In securing a conviction of Libby for perjury, special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald more or less adopted this theory, speaking of a "cloud" over the vice president. Senate majority leader Harry Reid crowed that the conviction held the administration "accountable for the campaign to manipulate intelligence and discredit war critics."

The Silberman-Robb commission has determined that no such campaign took place. The errors in pre-war intelligence, although real and grievous, were not the result of administration pressure on analysts. The Plame leak was the fault of an internal critic of the administration, Richard Armitage, and was not an illegal act. Libby had nothing to hide. And if his intent was to shield the vice president, why did he turn over notes indicating that Cheney was concerned about Wilson?

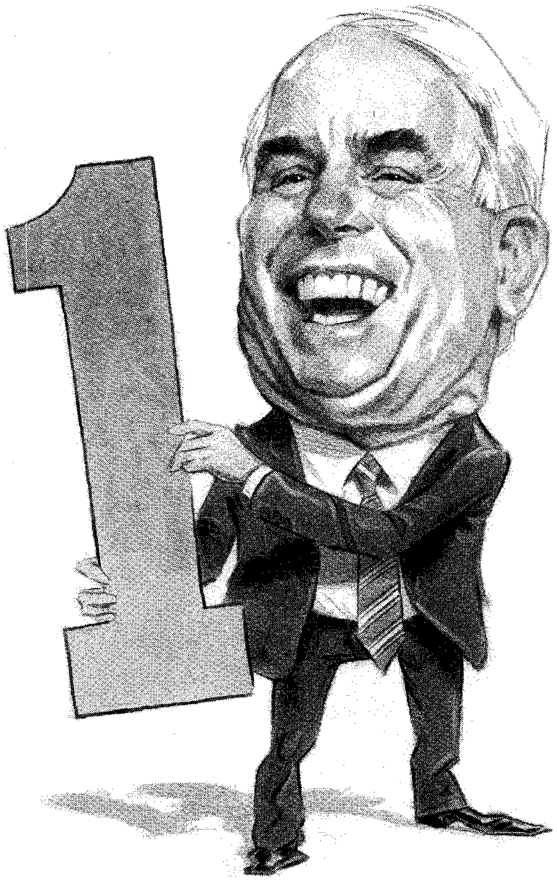
There ought to be a cloud over Fitzgerald's reputation. His investigation didn't focus on Armitage's role. It didn't focus on that of Ari Fleischer, the former White House press secretary, either. Fleischer admitted telling two reporters about Plame's employment, but he got immunity and the reporters weren't even questioned. Fleischer's testimony under oath contradicted that of a third reporter who said that he had heard about Plame from Fleischer. Yet Fleischer wasn't charged with perjury.

In this convoluted case, no two people have had the same memory of when and from whom they got information.

He shouldn't have been. In this convoluted case, no two people have had the same memory of when and from whom they got information. The jury was not allowed to consider all of this evidence, however, when it judged whether Libby's false testimony was an intentional lie or a memory lapse. Reasonable people can conclude that Libby simply erred.

President Bush has played a large role in Libby's tragedy. Factional infighting in his administration—the CIA and the State Department have been at odds with the White House—generated the case to begin with. Bush's Justice Department then fumbled, naming a special prosecutor even after it knew that Armitage was the leaker and no law had been broken.

The guidelines that Bush has followed in granting pardons stipulate that the recipient should have served time in prison and expressed remorse. But those guidelines are only that, guides, and they do not restrict the president's authority. This is a special case, for which Bush has special responsibility. He should pardon Libby, now.



DARREN GYGI

■ 2008 ■

Just One Term

What John McCain should pledge as he runs for president

RAMESH PONNURU

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN can increase his chances of winning the presidency in 2008 if he pledges not to run for it in 2012. He should pledge, that is, to serve only one term as president if elected. Why would any candidate do something so self-abnegating? Because it would help him both in the primaries and in the general election.

McCain was for a while the most popular politician in America, in large part because he wasn't seen as a typical politician. An admiring press corps helped put him in that flattering light. But he has lost both that reputation and the support of the press since 2004. Because he is taking the steps that are necessary to win the Republican nomination—such as calling for the retention of tax cuts he originally opposed—the press has fallen out of love with him and he risks appearing to be just another pandering, flip-flopping politician.

The number of McCain's flip-flops has been exaggerated. McCain has opposed a Federal Marriage Amendment because he doesn't think federal action on marriage is necessary. When McCain supported a marriage amendment in his own state, he wasn't being inconsistent on marriage amendments; he was being consistent on federalism. Many of his other moves can be similarly defended. But even if the perception of McCain is unfair, he needs to do something to change it.

To limit himself to one term as president would separate McCain from the rest of the pack—and particularly from Sen. Hillary Clinton, whose transparently calculating ambition is one of her major liabilities. McCain would implicitly be placing himself on the right side of the divide between those politicians who run to be someone and those who run to do something. In his case, presumably, that "something" would be to see America through an especially dangerous phase of the war on terrorism and, secondly, to address the nation's looming fiscal wreck. These tasks would be the veteran's last mission. The pledge would fit the persona.

Moreover, it would fit the narrative arc of McCain's career. He has been telling us for years that we should subordinate ourselves to a cause greater than self-interest. Giving up the possibility of a second term would be a way to show that he still means it. And if he runs on this twofold mission and wins, he'll have a clear mandate.

The pledge would also eliminate much of the rationale for a third-party campaign by New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, which some Republican strategists think could hurt their party in 2008. Bloomberg needs the major candidates to stick to the usual scripts to give him the chance to present himself as fresh choice. McCain can make himself the fresh choice.

In 2008, the country will be reaching the end of two full, back-to-back eight-year presidencies for the first time since 1825. And both the Clinton and Bush presidencies have felt longer than their years. The country might be in the mood for something different, and four years of John McCain may well look more attractive than eight years of Hillary Clinton. During much of the past two presidencies, the country has been evenly divided between the parties and a kind of trench warfare has resulted. Each side has been fighting furiously over small strips of ground, always plotting the next maneuver. McCain has stood for political reform. A one-term pledge would let him embody it.

It would also defuse the issue of McCain's age. His mother is still active in her 90s, but McCain, 70, has had recurrent skin cancer. A one-term pledge will calm people's anxieties. And he doesn't need to worry that it will instead call attention to his age, since the issue is bound to come up in any event.

Some conservatives worry that McCain will attempt to redefine the Republican party in his image. In one term, he won't be able to do that. If he signals that he is going to pick an acceptably conservative running mate, conservatives will have a lot less to fear. Plenty of people would fit the bill; Mitt Romney, for example. Four years as McCain's veep would allow him to demonstrate to skeptical conservatives that he really is one of them. It will be much easier for him to become the first Mormon president if he has already been the first Mormon vice president. For McCain to pick Romney would also signal that he is not letting past rivalries get in the way of party unity.

Some conservatives worry that McCain will attempt to redefine the Republican party in his image. In one term, he won't be able to do that.

Tim Pawlenty, the Republican governor of Minnesota, is another vice-presidential contender. He supports McCain's run, and will be the host of the Republican convention in 2008. While his reelection margin was very slight in the terrible Republican year of 2006, a ticket with him on it might win Minnesota for the Republicans for the first time since 1972. Conservatives have had their quibbles with Pawlenty—he supported a cigarette-tax hike, for instance—but a one-term McCain-Pawlenty ticket would not cause them any great worry about the Republican future. A dark horse is Mark Sanford, the governor of South Carolina, a hero of the Right and a bit of a maverick in his own right.

A one-term pledge might even give McCain a subtle advantage over Rudolph Giuliani, and not just because as mayor Giuliani briefly tried to change New York City law to extend his time in office. McCain may have a touch a moral vanity—a trait that he shares with President Bush—but is not considered to be an egomaniac. That word has been attached to the former mayor, and a pledge might set up a comparison that is flattering to McCain.

Senator McCain might worry that by forswearing a second term he would be reducing his leverage as president. He would become a lame duck the instant he took office. The celebrated awfulness of second presidential terms, however, probably has at least as much to do with longevity as with lame-duckness. Officials and agendas get exhausted, and people get exhausted with them. Re-nouncing a second term might help McCain avoid much of the trouble that it would otherwise bring.

McCain's sway with Congress will depend on how much support he has in the population at large. President Bush was able to have a great impact on congressional races in 2002, and could only hurt his favored candidates in 2006. The difference probably has more to do with the shift in his popularity during those years than with the fact that in the second case he was never going to be on the ballot again. As long as McCain is popular, he will retain most of his power to reward his friends and punish his enemies; and if he is unpopular, he will lose much of that power. That will be true whether he runs in 2012 or not. But his ability to enact his agenda might be improved if that agenda is not seen as a strategy to position him for a reelection campaign.

If being on the next ticket really is an asset for a president, however, a one-term McCain could take out an insurance plan by picking a running mate (such as Romney or Pawlenty) who can serve as an heir. The president and vice president would, taken as a team, continue to have leverage.

There is another reason that a one-term pledge might serve McCain well, and it has nothing to do with how the primary or general electorate would respond to it. Where the 2000 race seemed to be a joy for McCain, this race has been more like a chore. Maybe the weight of the Iraq War is pressing on him, or maybe his age has made him less buoyant. But it could be that McCain needs to do something that will recover his self-image as a maverick rather than a typical politician, so that he can play the part with the requisite vigor. **NR**

■ POLITICS

Kill This Word

Poor, abused, unrecognizable, meaningless 'neocon'

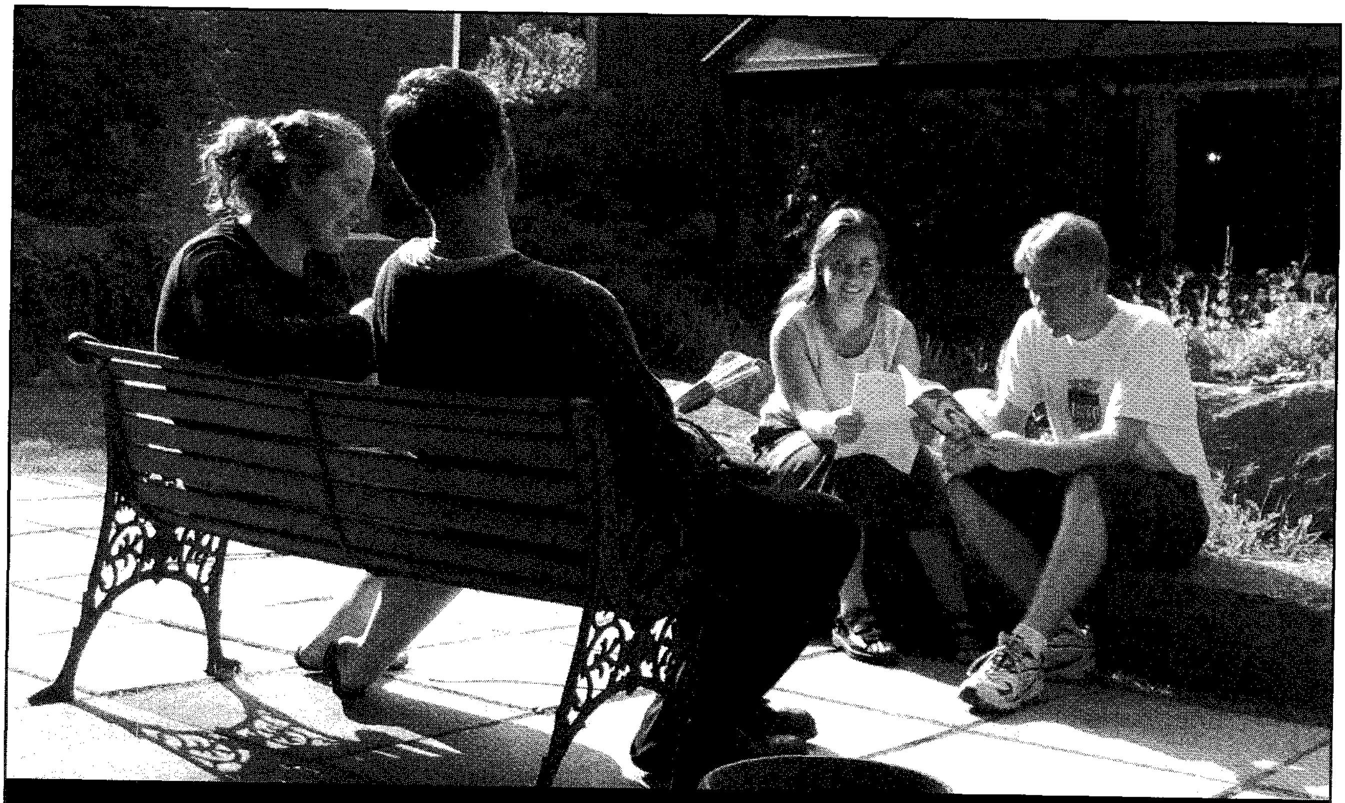
JONAH GOLDBERG

I WAS recently listening to a BBC radio program called *World Have Your Say*. A fascinating example of globalization at work, it's a worldwide call-in show where the global IQ regresses to the mean and keeps regressing. From every corner of the globe, Michael Moore–style liberals convene like a reunion of resistance members to bemoan the global hegemony of George W. Bush. It's reassuring to know that the French and Balinese can get together like old ladies around the global village well to chit-chat and agree on so much.

Anyway, on the segment I heard, a caller from Ohio with an oddly British accent explained that Hillary Clinton was too conservative to get the Democratic nomination or some such. His proof consisted largely of the fact that she was long associated with the Democratic Leadership Council. He went on to explain, like an Oxford don explaining the pluperfect tense in some dead language, that the DLC is a "neoconservative" institution. And by neoconservative, he meant (I'm quoting from memory) "believing America has a sacred right to hydrocarbons, wherever it might find them around the globe."

Now, while it's impossible to know for sure, it certainly seemed that the remark was received by the global Greek chorus as unremarkable, even insightful and thoughtful. What I *can* report for sure is that nobody said, "Put down the crack pipe."

By this point, of course, it should hardly be shocking that there is a widespread conviction that neoconservatism is the ideology of All Bad Things. One need only turn on the TV or stray just a few inches off the lighted path and into the



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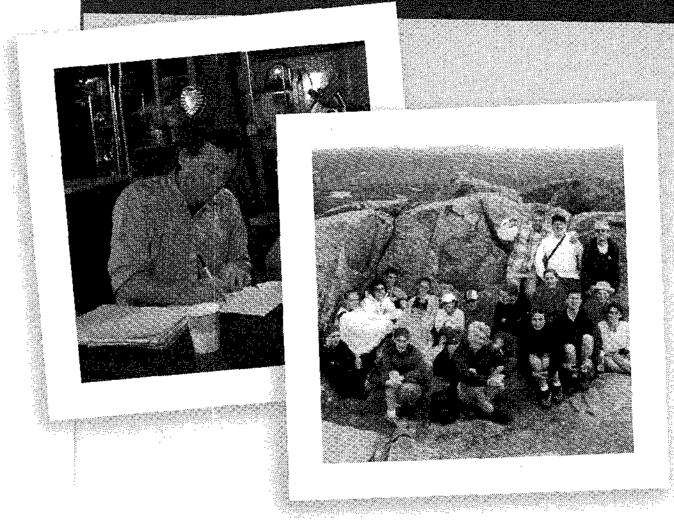

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darker alleys and unseemly neighborhoods of the Internet to discover whole cosmologies grounded on the granite metaphysical fact that neoconservatives are the dark priests of the profane, the cruel, and the greedy. It is a given that neocon means fascist, or crypto-fascist, or "Straussian" (which is merely German-Jewish for "fascist").

And while we will gingerly sidestep this buffoonery like a steaming pile in a pasture, there is at least one sense in which neoconservatism and fascism are linked. In 1946, George Orwell famously wrote that "the word Fascism has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies 'something not desirable.'" And this, ultimately, seems to be the single reliable definition of neoconservatism for anybody trying to decipher what passes for news and analysis in today's papers and magazines.

The word neoconservative lies panting on the ground, frothy with sweat, like an over-ridden old horse burdened with too much in its saddlebags.

For example, *Time* magazine's Michael Duffy recently reported that the "surge" in Iraq is the "latest salvo in the 30-year tong war between the two big foreign-policy factions in the Republican party: the internationalists and the neoconservatives." If neoconservatism (at least its foreign-policy strain) is something other than "internationalist" I have no idea what that could be. The sentence makes as much sense as saying that the two big factions in the Republican party are carbon-based life forms and neoconservatives. Indeed, for more than 30 years the gripe against neoconservatives has been that they are too internationalist, if by internationalist you mean something wacky like "concerned with international affairs" or "interested in engaging global politics" or, if you must, "defending Israel."

In older, saner times, people writing about foreign-policy factions in the Republican party spoke of at least three schools: realists, isolationists, and neoconservatives. The neocons were the most internationalist, which was just one reason that Russell Kirk denounced their "fanciful democratic globalism." It was the realists, by the way, who were most concerned about maintaining the oil supply, though phrases like "sacred rights" didn't usually trip off Kissingerian tongues. In 1992, when Joshua Muravchik, Ben Wattenberg (my old boss), and other prominent neoconservatives endorsed Bill Clinton, their statement (published in the *New York Times*) noted that Clinton "understood that this is a time when American leadership can give new energy and purpose to traditional alliances . . . such as . . . NATO . . . [and] can forge closer cooperation . . . with emerging powers, such as Japan." No internationalists to see here, folks.

In a sense the source of this confusion isn't simply the thumbless grasp so many have about the meaning of neoconservatism but the more profound confusion about what anything means at all. By way of explanation, it's worth noting here that the famous Orwell quote continues: "The words democracy, socialism, freedom, patriotic, realistic, justice have each of them several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another." In other words, it becomes easy to say that neoconservatives are something other than "internationalists" if internationalist has no useful meaning other than "not neoconservative"—i.e., "not evil."

Now, let me be clear: I come here not to praise neoconservatism, but to bury it. We could rehearse all the arguments about what neoconservatism is or isn't, was or wasn't, and it would not change a thing. It doesn't matter that "neoconservative" was originally used—pejoratively—to describe people who moved from left to right. It doesn't matter that Bill Kristol, the most infamous neocon in America today, was never a leftist at all, and that when he put pen to paper to explain his foreign policy, he explicitly called it something other than "neoconservative" ("neo-Reaganite," if you're curious). It doesn't matter that if your definition of neoconservatism involves former Communists who became military or anti-Communist hawks, then NATIONAL REVIEW was a nest of neoconservatism when *Commentary* was still a New Left journal commissioning pieces from James Baldwin.

The simple fact is this: The word is useless, spent. It lies panting on the ground, frothy with sweat, like an over-ridden old horse burdened with too much in its saddlebags, clinging to just enough life to plead for the day when it can be taken out of its misery, so the phrase "don't beat a dead horse" can finally be invoked.

In the European press, neocon means "freedom fries," theocracy, and war for Israel. In the swampy borderlands between paleoconservatism (don't get me started on *that* absurd neologism) and anti-Semitism, it means Jewish (or honorary Jewish) warmongering for Israel. In the swampier marshes of the Left, it means, well, the exact same thing. Left-wing historian Paul Buhle writes, "It is almost as if the anti-Semitic Protocols of Zion, successfully fought for a century, have suddenly returned with an industrial-sized grain of truth." Chris Matthews sees nothing wrong with asking guests if neoconservatives are loyal to America or to the neoconservative movement—as if they are incompatible things. In 2002 he asked the *Washington Post*'s Dana Milbank about the neocons in the White House: "Are they loyal to the Kristol neoconservative movement, or to the president?" On another show around that same time, he asked: "Does [the president] think Cheney is an honest broker or a neoconservative?" He didn't quite ask, "Are you now or have you ever been a neoconservative?"—but he's probably holding that line of questioning for the next presidential debate.

And oh, the blogs. Remember the TV show *Kids Say the Darndest Things*? A program called *Bloggers Say the Darndest Things* would have material until the sun blinked out from the sky or Chris Matthews stopped interrupting guests—whichever came first. Initially, I tried to search the Web for fun examples of blogger-idiocy to pepper this piece, but it proved maddening, like being told to go find some sand at the beach. Moreover, I feared it would seem like cherry-picking, since the blogosphere is a wizard's hat capable of producing an example of asininity without the slightest effort. So instead, I went to Google News and sim-

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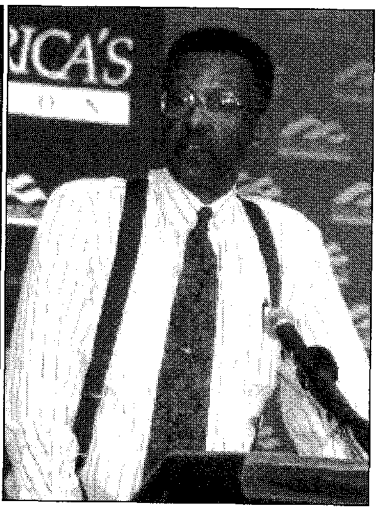

Dr. Walter Williams, economist

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ply typed the word "neocon," figuring that would give a more objective indication of where the zeitgeist is. The first hit was a letter to the editor in the *Arizona Republic* explaining how John McCain is no longer a lovable maverick but a "neocon" and hence evil and outside decent society. The second hit was an op-ed by the author of *GREED: The NeoConning of America* (she's also the host of howtheneoconsstolefreedom.blogspot.com). In that one we are informed, among many similar things, that "it is important to remember that [the *Wall Street Journal*'s] John Fund is not a journalist. He is a NeoCon Operative. His work requires simulating the appearance of being a journalist but facts are manufactured wholesale by those employed by the Rovian Cabal." Someone explain to me how the "paranoid style" is a right-wing phenomenon again?

In short, take the word behind the barn and be done with it. **NR**

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■ COVER STORY

Fiasco at Justice

The case of the fired U.S. attorneys

KATE O'BEIRNE

As a firestorm raged over the Justice Department's sacking of eight U.S. attorneys, attorney general Alberto Gonzales acknowledged, "We could have rolled out the decisions more smoothly." No kidding. The department's inept handling of the "mass firing" of a handful of the country's 93 U.S. attorneys has armed partisan critics, prompted demands for Gonzales's resignation, forced a costly reversal on the executive branch's authority, and jeopardized a GOP Senate seat. Damage to the reputations of the fired prosecutors has been unfair. Damage to the reputations of the senior Justice Department officials responsible for this fiasco, on the other hand, is eminently fair.

On December 7 of last year (an unfortunate coincidence that has led Gonzales's critics to claim the day will "live in infamy"), the Justice Department asked seven U.S. attorneys, including those in San Diego, Seattle, Albuquerque, and Las Vegas, to resign. (An eighth U.S. attorney had been asked to resign earlier in the year.) They had been confirmed to four-year terms as presidential appointees, and could be dismissed for good reason or no reason, but not for a bad reason, such as a desire on the administration's part to exert political influence on prosecutorial decisions. No reason was given, and the prosecutors unhappily complied.

According to the Congressional Research Service, in the past 25 years only five U.S. attorneys have left office for questionable conduct or been asked to resign in the midst of a president's term. Not surprisingly, the unprecedented number of recent resignations caught Congress's attention. "Not since the Saturday Night Massacre, when President Nixon forced the firing of the Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox, have we witnessed anything of this magnitude," thundered Patrick Leahy, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. He saw a conspiracy afoot in the absence of an Elliott Richardson "to defend the independence of federal prosecutors. Instead, the attorney general, the deputy attorney general, the Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys, and the White House all collaborated in these actions."

President Clinton had relieved all 93 Republican-appointed U.S. attorneys at the outset of his first term, and evidence has surfaced that the Bush White House intended to replace all of its own federal prosecutors at the beginning of its second term. Instead, the White House and the Justice Department settled on firing only a handful of the prosecutors. Since no explanation was given, members of Congress came up with their own. They alleged a "political purge" designed to interfere with public-corruption investigations, and accused the Justice Department of exploiting a little-noticed new provision in the Patriot Act to appoint interim prosecutors who could serve indefinitely without Senate approval.

Until a change in the law last year, the attorney general could appoint an interim U.S. attorney to serve for 120 days, after which a federal judge would choose a prosecutor to serve until the Senate confirmed a permanent replacement. The administration saw that system as an impermissible intrusion by the judiciary on executive authority. Last year's change permits the temporary prosecutor chosen by the attorney general to serve until a permanent replacement is nominated and confirmed.

The controversy escalated in early February, when deputy attorney general Paul McNulty testified that the seven prosecutors ousted on December 7 were asked to resign for "performance-related issues." McNulty said that the eighth U.S. attorney—in Little Rock—had been asked to resign so that his position could be filled by Timothy Griffin, a former Army JAG prosecutor and Iraq War veteran who worked at the RNC in 2000 and later for Karl Rove at the White House.

SPORTS TECH NEWS — 2007

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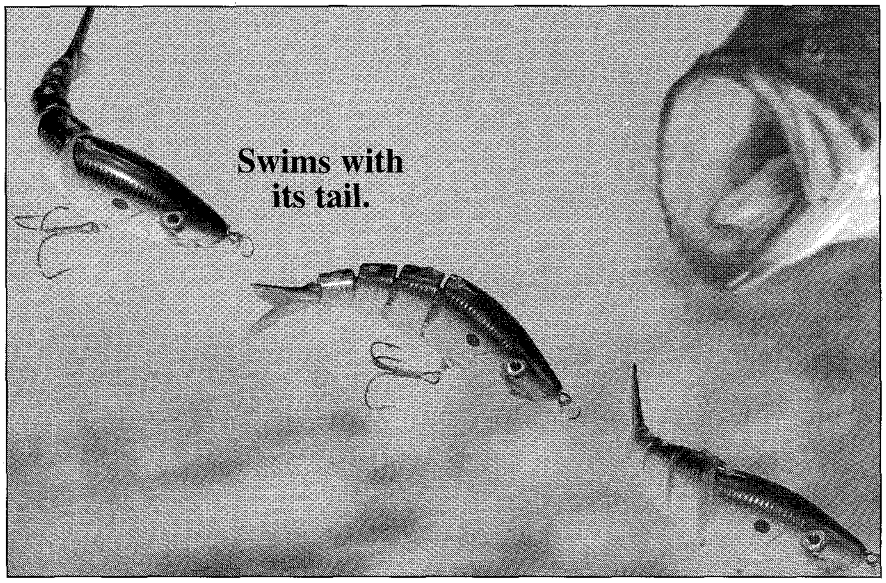

New lure swims like a real fish--nearly triples catch in Florida contest.

by Charlie Allen

ORLANDO, FL— A small company in Connecticut has developed a new lure that mimics the motion of a real fish so realistically eight professionals couldn't tell the difference between it and a live shad when it "swam" toward them on retrieval. The design eliminates wobbling, angled swimming and other unnatural motions that problem other hard bait lures. It swims upright and appears to propel itself with its tail.

Curiously, the company may have designed it too well. Tournament fishermen who have used it said it's possible officials will not allow it in contests where live bait is prohibited. They claim it swims more realistically than anything they have ever seen. If so, that would hurt the company's promotional efforts. Winning tournaments is an important part of marketing a new lure.

Fish would probably prefer to see it restricted. I watched eight veteran fishermen test the new lure (called The KickTail®) on a lake outside Orlando FL for about four hours. Four used the KickTail and four used a combination of their favorite lures and shiners (live bait). The four using the KickTail caught 41 fish versus 14 for the other four. In one boat the KickTail won 19 to 4. The KickTail also caught bigger fish, which suggests it triggers larger, less aggressive fish to strike. You can see why the company needs to get it into tournaments. An almost 3 to 1 advantage can mean thousands of dollars to a fisherman, and hundreds of thousands in sales to the company.

Inventor Scott Wilson lands a 10-pounder.

The KickTail's magic comes from a patented technology that breaks the tail into five segments. As water rushes by on retrieval, a little-known principle called aeronautical flutter causes the tail to wag left and right, as if the lure were propelling itself with its tail. Unlike other hard baits, the head remains stationary—only the tail wags. A company spokesman told me this.

"Fish attack live things, and they determine if something is alive by watching its movements. Marine biologists will tell you that the more a lure swims like a real fish, the more fish it will catch. Well, the only live thing the KickTail doesn't do is breathe. It's better than live bait! It lasts longer and it never hangs half-dead from a hook. It's always swimming wild and free. Fish can't stand it. We've seen fish that have just eaten go for the KickTail. It's like having another potato chip.

Increases catch almost 3 to 1.

"To make the KickTail even more lifelike, we gave it a natural shad color and shaped it like the most prevalent bait fish of all, the threadfin. Game fish gobble up more threadfin shad than any other baitfish.

"We knew the KickTail would out-fish other lures. It had to. Other lures wobble their heads and swim on an angle. But 41 fish to 14? That's huge! I tell you, in ten seconds anyone who has fished a day in his life knows this little swimmer's a home run. Fishermen reserved thousands of KickTails before we produced it! Here, reel it in and watch it swim toward you. Can you tell the difference between it and a live fish? (I said no.) Neither can the fish.

"The flutter technology also allows the KickTail to swim at the water's surface. Other top water lures must be worked to have any live action, or have a bill that makes them dive on retrieval. Our diver version is the only deep crank bait that let's you do tricks like 'walk the dog.' Twitch it at deep levels and it gives an irresistible, lifelike action. Other lures 'dig.' And there's no need for rattles. The five tail segments click together as you pull it through the water, calling fish from a distance."

Whether you fish for fun or profit, if you want a near 3 to 1 advantage, I would order now before the KickTail becomes known. The company even guarantees a refund, if you don't catch more fish and return the lures within 30 days. There are three versions: a floater for top water, a diver and a "dying shad" with a weed guard for fishing lily pads and other feeding spots. The company says it's the only hard bait of its kind in existence. Each lure costs $9.95 and you must order at least two. There is also a "Super 10-Pack" with additional colors for only $79.95, a savings of almost $20.00. S/h is only $7.00 no matter how many you order.

To order call **1-800-873-4415** (Ask for item # kt), or click **www.ngcsports.com** anytime or day or send a check or M.O. (or cc number and exp. date) to NGC Sports **(Dept. KT-1119)**, 60 Church Street, Yalesville, CT 06492. CT add sales tax. The KickTail is four inches long and works in salt and fresh water.

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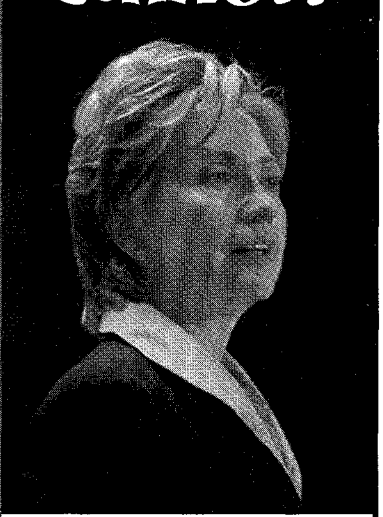
SHE SAID WHAT?!



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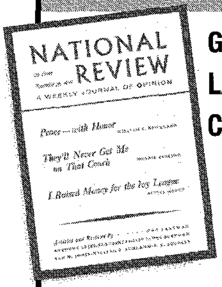

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(Unfortunately, Griffin has now withdrawn his name from consideration, having realized that his nomination would cause a confirmation fight that the administration has little stomach for.)

The maligned prosecutors reacted with predictable anger to McNulty’s accusation of professional shortcomings. They had largely received glowing reviews from the Justice Department. None of them was told of any performance problems when asked to resign. “When I heard him say that, I lit up like a tree,” said one. Within a month, they were testifying on Capitol Hill, leveling damaging charges of their own.

Former U.S. attorney David Iglesias of New Mexico, a former Navy JAG lawyer who was the inspiration for Tom Cruise’s character in *A Few Good Men*, told congressional committees that he had received phone calls from Sen. Pete Domenici and Rep. Heather Wilson, both Republicans, seeking information about his office’s corruption probes of New Mexico Democrats. Domenici had also complained about Iglesias to the administration multiple times. Iglesias said the phone calls made him feel “pressured” to deliver indictments before last November’s elections. Domenici and Wilson have denied that they intended to lean on the prosecutor, but their phone calls could jeopardize any future indictments in the corruption probes, and ethics complaints have been filed against both.

Former U.S. attorney John McKay of Washington State had originally said he was resigning because it was time to move on. Now he testified that there had been potentially illicit political interference because he had had to stop a senior GOP House aide from asking detailed questions about his investigation of Washington’s disputed 2004 gubernatorial election (in which a Democrat was certified the winner).

The former U.S. attorney in Arkansas, Bud Cummins, told Congress about an e-mail he wrote to the other fired prosecutors in which he summed up a phone conversation he had had with McNulty’s chief of staff in late February. Cummins recounted that the chief of staff had warned the fired prosecutors not to complain. “If they feel like any of us intend to continue to offer quotes to the press, or organize behind-the-scenes congressional pressure,” Cummins had written in his e-mail, “then they would feel forced to somehow pull their gloves off and offer public criticisms to defend their actions more fully.” Pull the gloves off is just what a Justice Department spokesman did when he accused the prosecutors of “grandstanding before Congress” and said that Cummins had “twisted” a collegial conversation “into a perceived threat.”

While congressional Democrats can be expected to exploit the Justice Department’s blunders and make hyperbolic charges about the politicization of federal prosecutions, the gloves-off treatment has angered GOP senators. John Ensign has vehemently complained in behalf of the Nevada prosecutor he backed for that position. And although Jon Kyl saw no evidence of improper political motives for the firings, he regrets that “some people’s reputations are going to suffer needlessly.”

Owing to the furor over the firings, the administration has dropped its opposition to Democratic legislation that would restore federal judges’ ability to appoint interim U.S. attorneys. And Republicans fret that Senator Domenici, damaged by the charge that he had unethical contact with a federal prosecutor, might retire rather than seek a seventh term. They fear that Representative Wilson, his presumptive political heir, has been damaged too.

As the fired prosecutors fight to salvage their reputations, the motives for their removals remain unclear. Alberto Gonzales’s chief of staff has resigned for failing to disclose his extensive communications with the White House to his superiors, but the inexcusably mishandled controversy is unlikely to end soon. A recent op-ed by the attorney general dismissing the fiasco as an “overblown personnel matter” highlighted the need for accountability: “Like me, U.S. attorneys are political appointees, and we all serve at the pleasure of the president. If U.S. attorneys are not executing their responsibilities in a manner that furthers the management and policy goals of departmental leadership, it is appropriate that they be replaced.” The inability to manage the replacement of a handful of U.S. attorneys points to “performance-related issues” in the senior ranks of the Justice Department. **NR**

You deserve a factual look at . . .

Jimmy Carter, Israel and the Jews

Is our former President ignorant, malevolent – or both?

Jimmy Carter, our 39th president, has just written a book in which he purports to clarify the causes of the unending Israel-Arab conflict. The title of the book shows the bias that permeates it: *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid.* It is a scurrilous comparison with the oppression of the black majority in South Africa. The entire book is shot through with falsehoods, distortions, and omissions of facts.

What are the facts?

There are so many falsehoods in the book that it isn't easy to know where to begin. But here are just a few of the many distortions in it.

- Yasser Arafat, the "leader" of the Palestinians for decades, was the man responsible for many murders that he had personally authorized. Hafez-al-Assad, the former tyrant of Syria, was also a mass murderer, personally responsible for the killing of at least 25,000 in the Syrian city of Hama. Both are described as leaders who diligently sought peace with Israel. Mr. Carter knows better, of course.

> "It is...not likely that the lies, misstatements, and omissions in his book are the result of ignorance. They must be the result, therefore, of malevolence – ..."

- Mr. Carter asserts that peace would have descended on Israel/Palestine if the Israelis had not "colonized" Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"). But that is quite incorrect. In the first place, the term "colonization" is not applicable. It presupposes that Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") is Palestinian territory, which those aggressive Israeli Jews have usurped. Not so, of course! Jews have had a presence in the area since time immemorial and certainly have at least the same rights to live there as the Arabs. It was never "Palestinian" land. So there can't have been any "colonization." Mr. Carter knows that, of course.
- Mr. Carter makes a great to-do about the "apartheid wall that snakes through of what is left of the West Bank." The purpose of this "wall," which is really a fence over most of its course, is to safeguard the Israeli populace from the marauding murder gangs that have terrorized Israel for years and have caused hundreds of victims. The fence has successfully done that. Mr. Carter knows that, of course.
- Mr. Carter focuses on Security Council Resolution No. 242, which calls for return of captured territories in exchange for peace, recognition, and secure boundaries. Nowhere does he mention that Israel accepted the Resolution and has fully complied with it. While not having returned *all* of those territories (the Resolution did not call for that), it has returned all of Gaza and, more important, the vast Sinai, with its strategic passes, its strategic port, its strategic expanse of a huge buffer zone, and the oil fields that Israel had developed. They yield over $1 billion in revenues per year, which would have made Israel independent of petroleum imports for the foreseeable future. And he does not mention that the Arab nations rejected Resolution 242 out of hand and instead issued their famous "three no's:" No peace, no recognition, and no negotiation with Israel. Mr. Carter knows that, of course.
- Mr. Carter blames Israelis for their lack of effort to compose their interminable differences with the Palestinians. But that is an outrageous lie. The Israelis have almost compulsively tried, time and time again, to find a solution to this never-ending problem. All of their efforts have faltered because of the racist and theocratic hatred that the Palestinians and Muslims have against the Jews, a hatred that nothing seems to assuage. One of the last memorable such efforts was in the last year of President Clinton's presidency, when he met with Mr. Arafat and with Ehud Barak, then prime minister of Israel. Mr. Barak declared his willingness to turn over 95% of the "West Bank" and the Arab quarter of Jerusalem to the Palestinians and to financial compensation to the "refugees." He did balk at allowing *all* of those so-called refugees – now miraculously swollen from the original 600,000 to 5 million – to "return" to Israel. It would (as intended) have meant the end of the Jewish state. Mr. Arafat left in a huff and started his second intifada, which has killed and maimed thousands on both sides. Mr. Carter knows that, of course.
- Space does not permit to give more examples of the lies, and omissions in Mr. Carter's malicious book. But there are certainly many, beginning with his not mentioning that in 1947 the United Nations advocated a division of the country into a Jewish and an Arab sector, with Jerusalem being internationalized. The Jews accepted that compromise; the Arabs rejected it and instead invaded Israel with five national armies. He does not mention that the largest contingent of Israelis are Jews expelled or forced to flee from their Arab home countries, where they had been living for centuries. Mr. Carter knows all of that, of course.

Mr. Carter was certainly one of our most ineffective presidents, comparable perhaps to Fillmore, Polk or Harding. But he was probably one of the most intelligent. It is therefore not likely that the lies, misstatements, and omissions in his book are the result of ignorance. They must be the result, therefore, of malevolence – against Israel and against the Jews.

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THE MEDIA

Bet on Black?

The trial of a mogul

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

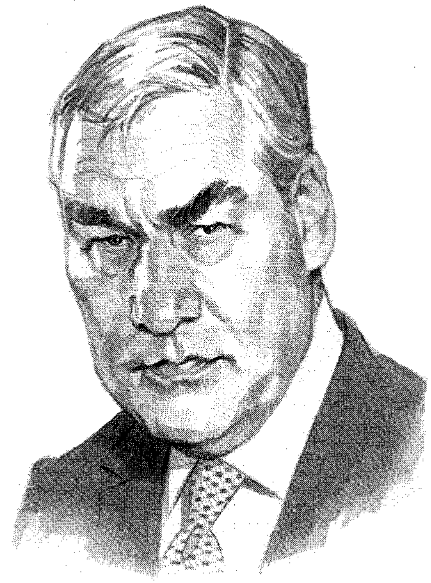
IT promises, even at this early date, to be the trial of the century. The international media magnate, Lord Black of Crossharbour, born Conrad Black in Canada, is on trial in Chicago for a variety of white-collar crimes from mail fraud to tax evasion relating to his management of the companies Hollinger Inc. and Hollinger International. Black had built up a media empire that included the two *Telegraph* papers in Britain, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *Jerusalem Post*, the Southam newspapers in Canada, and a North American chain of local and regional papers under the Hollinger umbrella. His board of directors included such impressive names as Henry Kissinger. He was elevated by Tony Blair to the House of Lords in 2001.

Yet if convicted in the next few weeks, Black could be sentenced to as much as 95 years in prison, without parole—and not in a country-club prison either. That would be a life sentence even if Black were not in his early sixties.

This story has migrated from the business section to the tabloid front pages because of who Black is: a Peer of the (British) Realm, a biographer of FDR and now Nixon, a jet-setting tycoon, an outspoken conservative with a Buckleyesque taste for orotund oracularities, and above all the husband of Barbara Amiel, whom the British magazine *Private Eye* once described in a rare understatement as a "reactionary glamorpuss." Amiel is a libertarian columnist (and occasional NR contributor) who flourished in both Canada and Britain by writing and saying the unsayable—for instance, that overzealous prosecutors were a greater danger to society than crime—with great pizzazz. Together they were a glamorous international power couple; today her spending is part of the case against him.

Black's problem, as he goes to court, is that he has already been convicted in the media. Their version of the story goes as follows: Shady Canadian steals *Daily Telegraph*, rides high, marries rich bitch, loots corporation to keep her in mink, is exposed by small shareholders, trapped by honest regulator, and now faces jail in perpetuity. Think of headlines like: BLACK IN RED FOR DROP-DEAD WIFE.

Now, there is both steak and sizzle here. The sizzle you have probably already sniffed: It is the allegation in the report of a Hollinger special committee that the Blacks lived high off the Hollinger. Barbara expensed her tips and Conrad her birthday party at La Grenouille. This "expensing" is at the opposite end of the social scale to Hillary Clinton's expensing of Bill's used underwear to the IRS. But they are equally annoying—and equally legal. Amiel was both a director and an editorial supervisor at Hollinger who sent long memos to editors on how to improve their papers. Whether her tips to doormen were legitimate expenditures for the company's benefits was a matter for Hollinger to decide. They were approved.



Conrad Black

DARREN GYGI

The famous birthday party (which—full disclosure—I attended) took place on the evening of the second day of a Hollinger directors' meeting. The guests included directors, senior Hollinger executives, clients, media celebrities, and wives. Mark Steyn points out that that is about right for an event put on by a media conglomerate and quotes someone, perhaps me, as describing it as "a classic New York evening: a business event masquerading as a social occasion." In short the birthday party was really a directors' dinner and, as such, legitimately billed to Hollinger. But Black paid one-third of the evening's cost just to be on the safe side. To no avail, apparently.

This is sizzle—prurient details of small relevance but designed to prejudice the casual reader. What of the steak? The main charge against Black relates to so-called "non-compete agreements"—sums paid by the purchaser of a newspaper so that the seller won't turn up later under some new corporate guise and launch a competing paper in the same market. Black and senior corporate executives negotiated a number of these deals but they arranged for the money to be paid directly to them rather than to Hollinger.

The prosecution says this was illegitimate looting of the corporation. But was it? The late Izzy Asper, the Canadian mogul who made the single largest purchase of newspapers from Hollinger, expressly said that he wanted the non-compete payments to apply to Black and his management team rather than to the corporation. (Fortunately for Black, he also put this insistence in a letter.) His logic seems to have been that it was Black he feared as a competitor, not Hollinger without Black. If that is so, he was prescient. Since Black was evicted from Hollinger and it was placed under the control of a new management team, the company disposed of almost all of its major newspaper assets. No one in the new management team has any idea of how to run existing papers, let alone start new ones. And the company is shrinking rather than expanding into new markets. Asper would have wasted his money if he had spent it on keeping Hollinger at bay.

A fallback position for the prosecution is that Black deceived his illustrious board on non-compete agreements (and other payments) even if they were legitimate. That is something that the courts will have to decide, of course. But it is implausible on the face of it that Black

Suffering from Chronic Pain? For Solutions, Read On...

Up to 30 million Americans suffer from under-treated chronic pain.[1] Families suffer with them. For most, suffering is completely unnecessary.

Problem: Medical schools do not provide sufficient curriculum time to pain management nor do most residency programs.
Solution: Encourage medical schools to prioritize teaching pain management per "best practice" as recommended by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)[2] and also provide educational workshops for physicians already in practice.

Problem: Even when properly informed, doctors are often afraid to follow "best practice" guidelines for patients who require large amounts of medication or even to accept pain patients out of fear of being targeted by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).
Solution: Seek another doctor if your prescription fails to relieve your pain. If you are unable to obtain adequate medication, complain to your senators and congressman and urge them to investigate the DEA's failure to respect "best practice" and persecution of conscientious physicians. (Conscientious physicians tend to attract extreme chronic pain sufferers, and hence prescribe greater quantities of opioids in general and huge doses to some patients as warranted. Thus they attract the scrutiny of overzealous DEA agents and prosecutors who either don't understand "best practice" or are seeking headlines to divert attention from their overall failure to prevent wide scale criminal diversion of licit and illicit drugs.)

Problem: Many patients suffer needlessly because they are either too stoic to complain or they mistakenly fear addiction.
Solution: Educate patients about the importance of reporting unrelieved pain, and make them aware that opioid treatment is rarely addictive.

Problem: Loved ones often underestimate the debilitating effects of chronic pain and discourage taking dosages as prescribed.
Solution: Involve family members in pain treatment consultations. Make them aware that their loved one's pain affects the entire family and can be successfully treated medically.

You are entitled to "Best Practice" treatment. Demand it!

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1) "Pain Facts: An Overview of American Pain Surveys," American Pain Foundation, from the web at http://www.painfoundation.org/print.asp?file=Library/PainSurveys.htm, last accessed Nov. 22, 2005.

2) Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations on Pain Management, from the web at http://www.jcaho.org/news+room/health+care+issues/jcaho+focuses+on+pain+management.htm, Nov. 22, 2005.

could have dazzled a board that included so many shrewd players with financial hocus-pocus if they had been discharging their duties diligently.

If the tabloid account is riddled with holes, what of the business-page version? This brings onto the stage another media mogul from the British Commonwealth. Rupert Murdoch is the man really responsible for both Conrad's rise and his fall. Only weeks after Black won control of the Telegraph group, Murdoch transformed the profit potential of all British newspapers by breaking the power of the labor unions. Black took advantage of this: From 1986 to 1993 the *Daily Telegraph* was a cash cow for Hollinger shareholders. In September 1993, however, Murdoch embarked on a price war. He cut the price of the *Times* by one-third to attract *Telegraph* readers. After resisting a retaliatory cut for almost a year, Black eventually had to stanch the hemorrhage of *Telegraph* readers by matching Murdoch's price cut. Immediately, Murdoch cut his price by another third. Because the *Telegraph* accounted for about half of Hollinger's profits, the price war deprived Hollinger of the resources needed for its expansion and caused a long-term fall in its share price.

Even Black's critics concede that he greatly improved the major newspapers he took over, and that in the *National Post* he launched a strong national paper in Canada. Launching papers, however, is costly. The *Post* was launched in 1998 and absorbed a great deal of the lower income now coming from the *Telegraph*. By the early 1990s, despite Black's best efforts, the share price remained stubbornly low. It was, as it remains, a poor economic climate for newspapers. Hollinger shareholders became increasingly discontented. Payments to Black and senior executives that would have escaped notice when the *Telegraph* cash cow was being milked by everyone suddenly became objects of suspicion. That in turn alerted watchful Wall Street types to the possibility of buying the stock low, contriving the departure of Black, and (they calculated) watching it rise painlessly. Thus the "corporate governance" campaign against Black began. It secured his resignation as CEO in November 2003.

Finally, the story on the legal pages. Corporate governance is supposed to give shareholders greater power in the companies they own, with a view to ensuring their better financial treatment by management and directors. This is an excellent idea, but hasn't really worked as it was supposed to. In the case of Hollinger, corporate governance since 2003 has produced the government of the company by an alliance of newly appointed directors (hostile to Black), regulators, and the courts. Insofar as any directing principle can be discerned in the actions of this alliance, it is to conduct a legal vendetta against Black rather than to protect the interests of the shareholders. One glaring example of this was when the Ontario Securities Commission, pressed by Richard Breeden (a former SEC chief who conducted Hollinger's investigation of itself), ruled against Black's taking Hollinger Inc. private by offering to buy its stock at a price of $7.60 Canadian. That stock now trades at $1 Canadian. Both regulators and courts have generally placed the frustrating of Black higher in their priorities than the enrichment of the Hollinger shareholders.

The impact on Hollinger has been disastrous. Once a global newspaper conglomerate, it is now one metropolitan U.S. daily and a penumbra of smaller local papers. Its losses in legal fees, regulatory costs, salaries and benefits of its new directors, and other costs amount to $136 million over three years—compared with the alleged "skimming" of $201 million over ten years by Black and his co-defendants.

Black is now on trial. Not all the crusaders are equally pleased, however. Christopher Browne of the investment company Tweedy Browne began it all with a letter to Hollinger International directors about the company's poor performance and the payments to Black and others. *Macleans* magazine recently reported that he now looked back on it with "deep ambivalence": "He makes no bones about it—if he could go back to the beginning, he would just take a pass and let Hollinger International be somebody else's problem."

Other shareholders may feel somewhat less ambivalence on the same point. **NR**

▪ EUROPE

Adieu, Chirac

The end of a lousy French president

DAVID PRYCE-JONES

JACQUES CHIRAC, president of France since 1995, has announced his decision not to run for yet another term. Though only some ten minutes long, his farewell speech was perfectly in character, its boasting indistinguishable from its mendacity.

He was, he said, "proud to have restored essential republican values"—though what these are, and how he restored them, he keeps to himself. And he was "proud to have led important reforms"—there were none, which is why France today has about 9 percent unemployment, an economy stifled by regulation, an unmanageable welfare state, and a national-identity crisis on top of everything. Also "proud to have fought insecurity unceasingly, and to have driven back crime"—though the government recently proved that it could not govern in the face of violence, first from disaffected Muslims and then from youths demanding jobs with guaranteed tenure. "France is maintaining its rank," he concluded with his usual grandiloquence. "I never ceased acting to serve this magnificent France . . . this France which, believe me, has not stopped astonishing the world."

The French are famous for shrugging at everything pretentious, and they seem to have given up on Chirac some time ago. The media at least show little or no regret (with the exception of cartoonists such as Jean-Marc Rochette, for whom Chirac, with his lordly manner, his physical traits, and his gaffes, was a gift). Candidates for the presidency are Nicolas Sarkozy on the

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Mr. Pryce-Jones is an NR senior editor, and the author, most recently, of *Betrayal: France, the Arabs, and the Jews.*

right, Ségolène Royal on the left, and François Bayrou, an independent. All three are more or less equal in the polls, and the result is unpredictable. Running well behind them is the elderly Jean-Marie Le Pen, whose popular fascism is nevertheless a symptom of the country's social illness.

Now aged 74, Chirac has been at the center of French public life for half a century. The career exemplifies the stagnancy, old-boy favoritism, and lack of democracy of French—and indeed European—politics. The last three French presidents, Georges Pompidou, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and François Mitterand, all promoted Chirac to be a minister or prime minister. From 1977 to 1995 he was also mayor of Paris, and for a period he was a member of the European parliament in Brussels as well.

Accusations of corruption have steadily swirled around him. One episode concerned some fields next to his house in the country on which a charity was due to develop a holiday camp for children, but which somehow finished in his hands. In another story, he was supposed to be paying for airplane tickets and expensive holidays with cash stuffed in envelopes—huge amounts allegedly part of secret subsidies to which his rank entitled him. Thousands of dollars' worth of Paris municipal funds apparently also went to pay for the Chirac family groceries.

One investigation was opened in 1994 into bribes paid for the allocation of public-housing projects in Paris, and another, a year later, into similar bribery for refurbishing secondary schools. Under Chirac's regime, officials were said to receive reserved apartments. Yet another investigation was held into fictitious jobs given to Chirac's party loyalists in return for their granting public contracts. In spite of widespread outrage, Chirac had the law fixed to say that the president cannot be prosecuted or called as a witness during his term of office. Eric Halphen, the judge who might have sat on Chirac's case, resigned in disgust. To make doubly sure to be beyond the law, Chirac appointed his legal adviser as chief prosecutor of Paris, a key post in launching any anti-corruption proceedings. Several Chirac loyalists, including his colleague and former prime minister Alain Juppé, have already received prison sentences for illegal fundraising. Mysteriously, the cell doors never close on them.

Chirac's career exemplifies the stagnancy, old-boy favoritism, and lack of democracy of French politics.

Libération, a left-wing paper to be sure, wonders—as many do—whether Chirac

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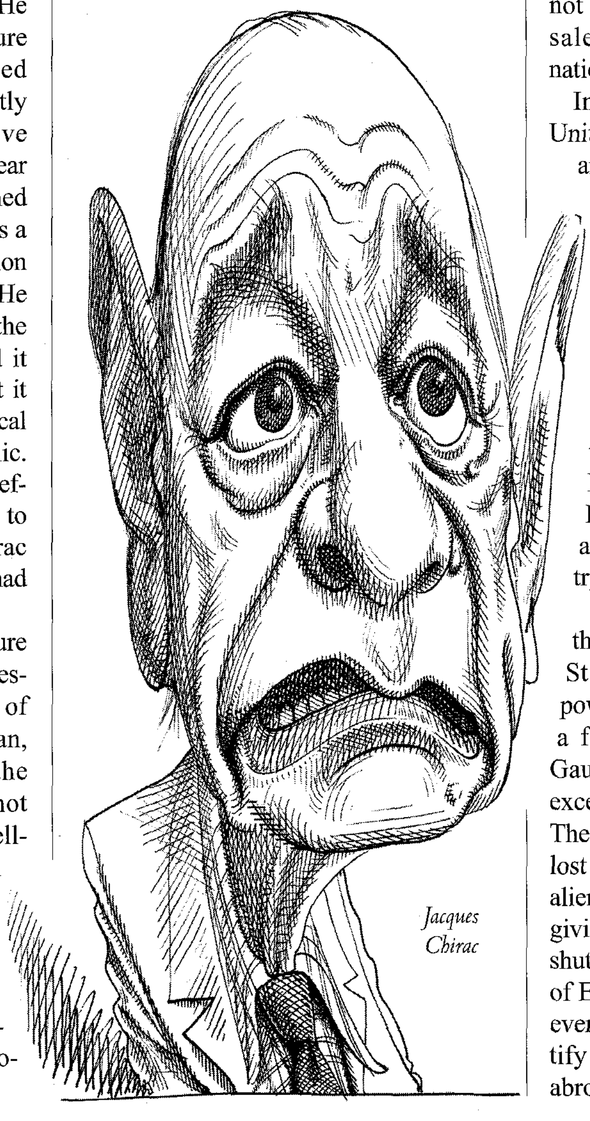
out of office will now face prosecution. Halphen, today vice-president of the Paris municipal court, has just given an interview to say that most French politicians are corrupt and there is not much anyone can do about it. In the 2002 presidential election, Chirac and Le Pen were in a final runoff, a contest lampooned across the country with the slogan "better the crook than the fascist."

Chirac's political judgment has been highly erratic. In 1997, he suddenly dissolved the National Assembly where his right-wing majority had another three years to run. The Socialists duly won the ensuing election, which led under the French constitution to "cohabitation," that is to say a president and a government of different parties. This recipe for paralysis accounts for the general sense of standstill currently afflicting France. Under Chirac, domestic reform has become imperative but impossible.

Nor is that the only contradiction. He likes to assert that war signifies failure (particularly if waged by the United States), but French forces are currently engaged on military missions in five African countries. Once ordering nuclear tests in the Pacific, he has since turned fashionably green. He has been at times a Gaullist opponent of the European Union and at times its blinkered champion. He believed that the EU ought to have the constitution devised by Giscard, and it might well have been possible to foist it onto the public by the usual monarchical means practiced in the French republic. Instead Chirac submitted the issue to a referendum. The large majority saying no to the proposed constitution shook Chirac badly, revealing how out of touch he had become.

In his day, General de Gaulle made sure that in the field of foreign policy the president constitutionally has the powers of an absolute monarch. As a young man, Chirac commanded a platoon in the Algerian war, and he probably is not under any illusion that Arabs are well-wishers of France or any Western power. However, he has always acted as if the French national interest lay in propitiating the Arab and Muslim world, ceding to all its demands and ambitions in the hope of receiving benefits in return, whether political, diplomatic, or economic.

This course of action has led France into a political and moral dead end. Chirac will be remembered as the man who more than anyone else committed France to empower Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and is responsible therefore for contributing to its criminality. When Saddam visited France as far back as 1975 to buy aircraft and the nuclear reactor that the Israelis were eventually obliged to destroy, Chirac gushed, "I welcome you as a friend," adding that "impulses of the heart" motivated him. Unwavering, he did his best to defend Saddam, right up to the point of ensuring that the campaign to overthrow him in 2003 did not receive a final vote of approval in the United Nations. He jeered at European leaders then supporting the United States with the unforgettable words that they had "missed a good opportunity to keep quiet" and that their behavior was not "well brought up." With equal insouciance, Chirac lately pronounced that a nuclear weapon in the hands of Iran was no danger to anyone.



Jacques Chirac

ROMAN GENN

Yasser Arafat was the other main beneficiary of Chirac's impulses. Nobody in the West took greater pains than he to apologize for Arafat and promote the Palestinian cause. No matter what acts of terror the PLO committed, no matter the international censure, Chirac's support was unconditional. Arafat turned to him in one crisis after another, referring to him as "Dr. Chirac" to his face. When Arafat fell mortally ill, Chirac sent a French government plane to bring him to a military hospital in Paris. After Arafat's death, Chirac arranged ceremonies suitable for a head of state. In a eulogy, eyes watering, he said of this international terrorist responsible for the deaths of so many, "With him disappears a man of courage and conviction." A final favor that he must have approved—if not initiated—was a death certificate that gave Arafat's birthplace not as Cairo (as was the case) but Jerusalem, thereby faking a Palestinian-nationalist credential.

In his youth Chirac spent time in the United States. Quite possibly, he was not anti-American in his inner self. Quite possibly, it was only a theatrical gesture when he walked out of a high-level meeting at which some other Frenchman chose to speak English, or when he welcomed the thuggish Lebanese Hezbollah leader to a summit for French-language speakers. Quite possibly, he thought that opposition to President Bush over Iraq would give his "magnificent France" the primacy in international affairs that he believes to be the country's due.

Like his policy of currying favor with the Arabs, his stance against the United States has been primarily a bid for power and reach in the world. Here was a final expression of the antiquated Gaullist illusion that France has some exceptional and missionary role to play. The outcome, however, is that France has lost the little influence it could have had, alienating its natural democratic allies by giving preference to brutal tyrants, and so shutting itself out in Washington, in much of Europe, and in the Middle East. Whoever is the next president will have to rectify this disastrous legacy at home and abroad. It will not be easy. **NR**

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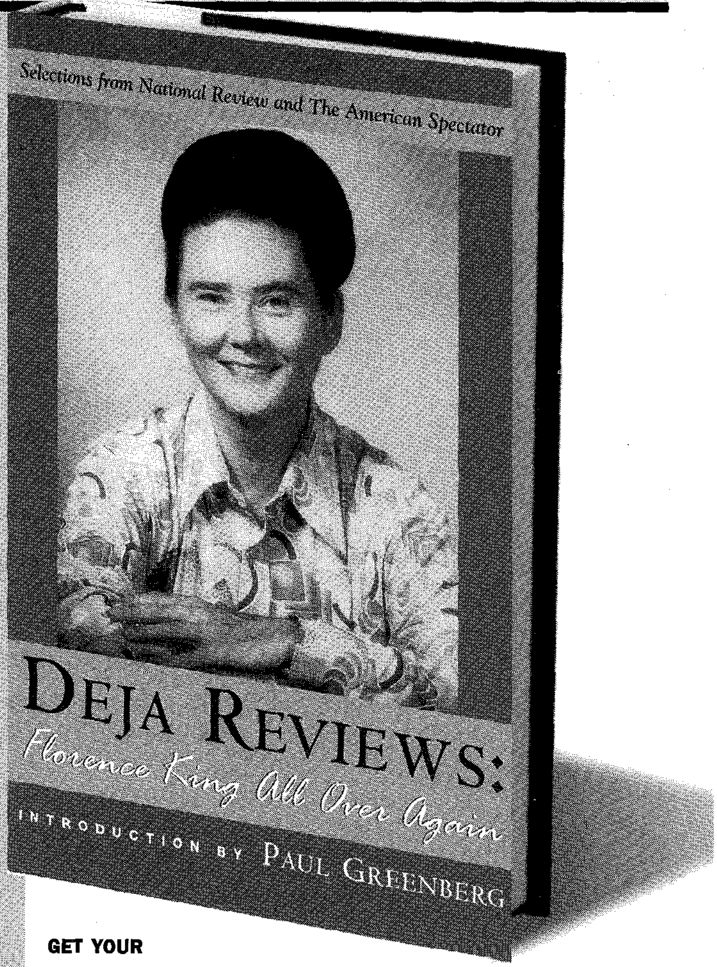
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Scootergate

How the White House messed things up

BYRON YORK

ON January 24, a man named Craig Schmall took the stand in the perjury-and-obstruction trial of I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby. Schmall works for the CIA; in 2002 and 2003, he conducted the daily intelligence briefing for both Vice President Dick Cheney and Libby, then the VP's chief of staff. In his testimony, Schmall had a hard time remembering much of what went on in those briefings—he explained that he had outlined dozens of threats to national security each day and that, in retrospect, they all tended to blur together. But Schmall remembered one moment quite specifically.

It happened in June 2003. In the preceding year, during the run-up to the war in Iraq, Cheney and Libby had visited CIA headquarters several times for briefings on Iraqi weapons programs. By June, American forces in Iraq had not found the expected stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, and people at the CIA were beginning to accuse the vice president and his top aide of leaning on intelligence analysts to come up with evidence supporting the war. On June 5, 2003, the *Washington Post*, relying on "senior intelligence officials," published a front-page story headlined "Some Iraq Analysts Felt Pressure from Cheney Visits." The paper reported that the visits had created "an environment in which some analysts felt they were being pressured to make their assessments fit with the Bush administration's policy objectives."

Libby was unhappy, to say the least. "He was pretty annoyed," Schmall recalled. "He told me that a reporter had talked to him, and this reporter told him that a direct source had told him, the reporter, that analysts were feeling pressured and bullied at one of the recent briefings out at [CIA] headquarters that the vice president and Mr. Libby participated in. He was annoyed that somebody at the agency was talking to a reporter about this briefing."

The charges coming out of the CIA were very serious, and Schmall testified that he decided to look into the issue for himself. What he found was quite different from the story on the front page of the *Post*. "I talked to a manager who was present at the briefing," Schmall recalled. "I asked them if they felt pressured or bullied, and she said absolutely not, that they were actually happy to have the opportunity to talk to Vice President Cheney and Mr. Libby about their topics."

Schmall's revelation received no coverage in the newspapers or on television. But it tells us a lot, not just about the Libby case but also about the larger dysfunction inside the administration that resulted in the CIA leak affair. Between the beginning of 2002 and the fall of 2003, relations between the vice president's office and some elements at the CIA—not the do-your-job analyst with whom Schmall checked, but the ones who leaked to the *Post* and other press outlets—came to resemble a cold war.

It was a situation in which barely contained rivalries were strained by the failure to find weapons in Iraq—and then pushed over the edge when former ambassador Joseph Wilson began a campaign of high-profile attacks on the vice president and other top officials. When the infighting finally erupted into open warfare, it showed Washington and the world that the one man who had the power to stop it—George W. Bush—was no longer fully in control of his own administration.

IT DIDN'T START WITH CHENEY

One of the first things we learned at the Libby trial was that the so-called Niger uranium matter did not begin as we thought it had. The conventional wisdom is that Dick Cheney got things going when he asked a question about possible Iraqi attempts to purchase uranium in Africa. After that, CIA employee Valerie Plame Wilson suggested sending her husband to look into the issue, and after that, the CIA flew Joseph Wilson to Niger to investigate. Wilson then came home, told the CIA about his findings, and, once the issue became controversial, went on a public campaign against the administration.

That's the conventional wisdom. But now we know differently. It turns out Mrs. Wilson suggested her husband's trip *before* the vice president made his request for information. A never-before-seen CIA document entered into evidence at the Libby trial showed that Cheney asked about possible Iraqi uranium purchases on January 13, 2002. But we have known for a while, ever since the Senate Intelligence Committee released a report on the matter, that Mrs. Wilson offered her husband's services in a memo written on January 12—the day before the vice president's inquiry. What that tells us is that Joseph Wilson's visit to Niger, which Wilson himself suggested was made at the behest of the vice president, was actually in the works before Dick Cheney asked his now-famous question.

The reason Mrs. Wilson made her suggestion was that she had seen a new report from the Defense Intelligence Agency—a rival of the CIA. The DIA report stated emphatically that Niger had "signed an agreement to sell 500 tons of uranium a year to Baghdad." Mrs. Wilson, who later called the report "crazy," was apparently reacting to it when she wrote the memo proposing that her husband look into the matter. The vice president's request, previously thought to be the act that set off the whole chain of events, appears to have been an afterthought; the entire affair had its roots not in the vice president's office but in pre-existing rivalries between intelligence services. And then it got out of hand.

THE WORLD FINGERPOINTING CHAMPIONSHIP

In January 2003, George W. Bush uttered the famous "16 words" in his State of the Union address: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." A few months later, reports that the president's claim was false began to appear in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. The reports said, moreover, that the White House knew the claim was false because the CIA had sent an envoy to Africa to investigate the uranium story. In May, *Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof cited "a person involved in the Niger caper"—most certainly Joseph Wilson himself—to say that the still-anonymous envoy had debunked the whole uranium story, including the claim that documents, now known to have been forged, were evidence of a uranium purchase. (By the way, at the trial we also saw, for the first time, the CIA's write-up of Wilson's oral report on his trip. Not only did Wilson not debunk anything—he never saw those forged documents—he also reported that just two and a half years earlier there was evidence that Iraq had approached Nigerian officials for the purpose of buying uranium.)

The White House quickly found itself on the defensive. On June 8, 2003, during an appearance on *Meet the Press*, then–national security adviser Condoleezza Rice was asked repeatedly about the 16-words controversy. Rice said that neither she nor other top administration officials knew about the infamous Niger forged-documents story. "We did not know at the time—no one knew at the time, in our circles—maybe someone knew down in the bowels of the agency, but no one in our circles knew that there were doubts and suspicions that this might be a forgery," Rice said.

Rice's statement made Joseph Wilson, the "person involved in the Niger caper," very, very angry. "He was really mad," testified Marc Grossman, a former State Department official and friend of Wilson's who talked to Wilson the day after Rice's television appearance. "He told me that he was angry at the way he had been described [on *Meet the Press*]. He was very mad at the way he'd been described and that people were not taking him seriously. What he told me was that he had been described as some low-level person, and he was very upset by that." Much of the CIA leak scandal, it appears, stemmed from the fact that Joseph Wilson was livid about the impression that Condoleezza Rice was treating him, Joseph Wilson, a former ambassador to Gabon, as a nobody. Grossman testified that Wilson said he was considering going public with his charges.

A few days later, as if on cue, another Kristof column appeared, detailing the story of a former ambassador—still

UNHAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Fifty Years Since Roth v. United States

The National Tragedy of the Supreme Court's Misjudgment on Obscenity

by Daniel Mark Cohen

If the people of the United States collectively endorse a single prayer, one that, universal in its reach, transcends the necessary differences in faith and ethnicity that otherwise divide the nation, that prayer consists of three simple words:

God bless America.

But why should God bless America when her people, in ever increasing numbers, (now easily counted in the tens of millions), participate in an unacknowledged culture of prostitution, manifest most visibly in their mass patronage of Internet and cable-television pornography? (For what is pornography, after all, but prostitution mediated by photographic cameras?)

And why should God bless America when, as a consequence, she insists on the free, unregulated distribution via the Internet of the most vile sexual images so that, hourly, such pictures reach and indelibly corrupt the otherwise innocent eyes and chaste minds of the country's millions of unsupervised children?

God bless America?

No.

"Words without thoughts never to heaven go."
-Shakespeare

anonymous—and his trip to Africa. The administration was guilty, Kristof wrote, not just of "hyping intelligence, but of asserting something that had already been flatly discredited by an envoy investigating at the behest of the office of Vice President Dick Cheney." Wilson was indeed taking his campaign to the public.

By that time, all the ingredients of a disaster were in place. Elements within the CIA were mad at the vice president's office. The vice president's office was mad at the elements inside the CIA. And Joe Wilson was determined to have his I'm-not-some-low-level-staffer-in-the-bowels-of-the-building revenge.

At the Libby trial, we heard the inside story of the vice president's attempts to regain control of the situation. A few days after Kristof's second column appeared, chief of staff Libby met with reporter Judith Miller, then of the *New York Times*. On the witness stand, Miller said that in the June 23, 2003, meeting, Libby "appeared to me to be agitated and frustrated and angry." Miller recalled that Libby "was concerned that the CIA was beginning to backpedal, to try to distance itself from the unequivocal intelligence estimates it had provided before the war, by what he called a 'perverted war of leaks.'"

But the leaks continued. And a couple of weeks later, on July 6, 2003, Joe Wilson went fully public, by name, with a splashy op-ed in the *Times* and his own appearance on *Meet the Press*. The behind-the-scenes battle had moved to stage center.

So the vice president's office tried to get its side of the story out. We don't know this guy Wilson, officials said. We didn't send him to Africa. We didn't get any report on his trip to Africa. We never heard of it until he went public. And we don't know how he was chosen for the job (an indirect reference to Valerie Plame Wilson's role). While that sounded reasonable at the time—the talking points were, in fact, true—the White House pushback had the effect of making those resistant elements within the CIA more determined to fight. "The CIA felt slighted," says one White House ally. "They don't like to be questioned."

A former CIA official explains it this way. When the vice president's office said it hadn't heard of Joe Wilson, and didn't know about his trip, people at the CIA suspected the VP's office was setting them up for blame, and they took offense. "They heard, 'How dare [the CIA] send this guy who is a known Democratic political operative?'" says the former CIA official. It was as if the vice president's office was saying, "How dare the CIA try to undermine us?"

Finally, when Robert Novak's July 14, 2003, column appeared, naming Valerie Plame Wilson as Joseph Wilson's wife, the CIA struck yet again. The agency referred the leak to the Justice Department, but lawyers at Justice, apparently skeptical that an investigation would be successful, did nothing. So the CIA hit back harder, with then-director George Tenet personally writing a letter to Justice demanding that action be taken. It's unclear whether that letter would have changed anything had it not been leaked to the press, which set off a political firestorm, which set off the CIA leak investigation. Events were underway that would ultimately lead to the Libby trial and all its revelations.

The starry Wilsons

OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS

BREAKDOWN

So that is what we have learned. But one key question was not answered in the testimony, or in the dozens of documents that came to light in the trial. Why did the Bush White House allow the infighting to go on for so long? It did enormous damage to the president, the administration's credibility, and the war effort, and yet George W. Bush was apparently unable to knock heads and force the combatants to stand down and work as a team in support of his policy.

"I think that the people in the president's first circle of advisers were not really paying attention to the competing factions," says one former administration official who has followed the matter closely. "I think that they were interested in their own internal rivalries, and they were aware that there were people at the CIA and the State Department who were taking potshots, but they were so busy protecting their own turf and their own standing with the president himself that they were not working as a team."

Perhaps the most basic cause of the breakdown, the former administration aide suggests, is that the president was determined not to be involved in what he and his top advisers contemptuously refer to as the ways of Washington. They didn't respond forcefully enough when the infighting began because they simply looked down on that kind of stuff. "They have such disdain for what they call 'the Washington game' that they got caught by it," says the former official. "This is really an exercise in staff management, and they failed." **NR**

■ COVER STORY III

A Question of Competence

George W. Bush has failed in some basics

RICHARD LOWRY

POLITICAL commentators are scrambling to explain the extraordinary rise of former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani in the 2008 GOP nomination contest. The conventional explanation is that, buoyed by his 9/11 heroism and accomplishments as mayor, he is riding a wave among Republican voters relatively unburdened by knowledge of his chaotic personal life and liberal social views. This is certainly true. But the Giuliani wave has been lent extra force by another factor shaping the political environment: the Bush administration's increasing association with executive dysfunction.

The administration's stumbles have created an implicit "competence primary" in the Republican race, one in which Giuliani—with his success running the fourth-largest government in the country—is particularly suited to thrive. The importance of this aspect of the race is another early drag on the candidacy of Arizona senator John McCain, who is: the only major Republican candidate currently in Washington, D.C.—as always, the focus of disgust with the federal government; the only major candidate without any executive experience whatsoever; and the major candidate—ironically enough—most closely associated with George W. Bush.

That "competence" would become a buzzword, not of Bush supporters but of his critics, is an unexpected turnabout from when he entered office six years ago. Then, it was common to note the experience and gravitas of the Bush team. They were the "adults" who would run Washington efficiently after the drama and dithering of the Clinton years. Bush was the first MBA and CEO president, who would rely on his management skills to harness the abilities of the heavyweights around him.

Instead, the incompetence charge has gained such traction that even many Republicans buy it. Some of Bush's strengths as a political leader, particularly his loyalty and optimism, have proven to have a double edge when it comes to running the government. He has made a few key bad decisions about policy and personnel, compounded them by not reacting quickly enough when things began to go wrong, and failed to create a sense of accountability in his government. He has seemed to have a much stronger sense of ends than means, and neglected the relation between the two.

The upshot is that even Republican primary voters will be looking in 2008 for someone who doesn't run the government like George W. Bush.

It must be said that running a $3 trillion government is too big a job for anyone. There is too much going on for any one person to control or manage it flawlessly, and in no circumstance will the federal government be a model of efficiency. Bush has been hurt particularly by two massive events that might have been beyond the managing of the most talented executive—a hurricane that devastated an area larger than Great Britain in the Gulf Coast and the "ungrateful volcano" of Iraq. But both still tell heavily against his administrative record.

Bush has certainly had successes. The prescription-drug program is, for better or worse, one of his most important domestic initiatives. Its design was hideously complex and its implementation a gargantuan bureaucratic task. Initial stumbles led Democrats and the press to lump it into a narrative of Bush incompetence. It was a high-profile example in an Alan Wolfe essay in *The Washington Monthly* titled "Why Conservatives Can't Govern." But the program has turned out to be popular, relatively well run, and less expensive then expected.

Alas, there are also plenty of lowlights. If they were to be turned into a trashy TV documentary, it would be billed, "When bureaucracy goes bad": the CIA and FBI prior to 9/11 (the infamous failure to "connect the dots"); the CIA again in the run-up to the Iraq War (the over-interpretation of dated, incomplete intelligence); the State Department and the Pentagon in the planning for the post-combat phase of the Iraq War (no unified plan); FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the recovery since (at first overwhelmed and then simply inefficient); the Pentagon, again, in the equipping of U.S. troops and the reaction to the growing insurgency in Iraq (too slow); the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States in the handling of the Dubai ports deal (ham-handed); the Justice Department's handling of the firing of U.S. attorneys (also ham-handed); the Army and VA in the Walter Reed scandal (plodding and unresponsive); the FBI, again, in the matter of national-security letters (inexcusably sloppy).

'GOOD MAN'

Bush's management problems begin with the way he evaluates and values people. Bush has a bad case of the "good man syndrome." That is the tendency, on the slender evidence of a personal encounter or two, to pronounce someone a "good man," on whom a geopolitical relationship can be based or major responsibilities placed. Personal relationships are important to all politicians, and all will rely to some extent or another on their gut instincts about people. But with Bush, it is particularly so.

The most famous example is Vladimir Putin. Bush professed to have gotten a "sense of his soul" and—against the evidence of the Russian leader's background and of common sense—pronounced him "straightforward and trustworthy." Russia has been sliding into a neo-czarist authoritarianism ever since.

Bush obviously doesn't have any control over who rules Russia. Of more relevance to his own government, Bush had Gen. George Casey to dinner, where he watched how he treated his wife and kids and ascertained that he was a good man. In a meeting with journalists in September 2006, Bush cited this as evidence in Casey's favor, never mind that it was clear by then Casey was losing the Iraq War. Whether you are a good man or not has no relation to your ability to fight and win a war. Indeed, the two might be inversely related.

The good man syndrome is related to Bush's clannishness. It was said of the personnel in the administration of George H. W. Bush that they didn't have agendas, but mortgages. The personnel in the second administration don't have agendas, but loyalties—to George W. Bush, to whom many of them owe everything professionally.

This can be a strength. It enhances cohesiveness. But the administration has also overvalued loyalty, tending to shut out other talented people and giving loyalists jobs for which they might not be suited. The thinking was that the administration would be run in such a top-down manner that young and inexperienced people could be placed in positions farther down the food chain without consequence. But those people still have to make decisions and manage people.

Once inside the charmed Bush circle, people tend to stay there, and rise to the level of their incompetence. It's hard for an outsider to break in. When the administration was considering a second-term shakeup, almost all the speculation centered on how to move current administration officials from one job to another, and that's mostly what happened.

> **Bush's reflex to stand by his man points to a key weakness in his management style.**

Press secretary Tony Snow—a late addition—is an exception to the rule. Former press secretary Scott McLellan and attorney general Al Gonzales are illustrations of it. The most flagrant example of the rule would have been Harriet Miers, who was only marginally fit—if that—to be White House counsel, but was almost promoted all the way to the Supreme Court. When the qualifications of his choice were questioned, Bush replied that the critics didn't know Harriet Miers the way he knew her and that she was a "good woman."

For Bush, loyalty runs two ways, an exceptional quality for a politician and one that speaks well of his character. Loyalty isn't just owed to him, he returns it.

The characteristic act of Bush's political leadership in the 2000 nomination contest was to lose New Hampshire by 19 points to John McCain—a debacle—and yet not fire his top political aides. This turned out to be the right decision. Doing otherwise would have denied him the services of the supremely talented Karl Rove. By not panicking and focusing his team on the task ahead in South Carolina, Bush righted his campaign and won the nomination. But this approach isn't the right one in every circumstance and, in the presidency, it has ill served him.

Politically, it can put Bush in the position of embracing failure. Instead of declaring an individual or agency's performance unacceptable to him, he defends the questionable performance and therefore associates himself with it. Managerially, it can saddle him with ineffective underlings.

After 9/11, Bush embraced the CIA and eschewed any finger-pointing after the massive intelligence failure that contributed to 9/11. Politically, therefore, the administration got itself in the awkward position of defending the government's handling of the terror threat prior to 9/11. Managerially, he got almost another three years of George Tenet—and the massive intelligence failure prior to the Iraq War.

After Katrina, Bush uttered some of his most notorious words when he was in this rallying-to-his-embattled-team mode. "Brownie, you're doing a heck of a job" was a characteristic Bush statement, defending and encouraging a Bush loyalist. But it meant that for the first crucial days after the storm Bush was promoting and defending the federal response rather than acknowledging its inadequacies and declaring them unacceptable to him—as he eventually did, but too late. His presidency had sustained damage from which it may never recover.

Bush's tendency to circle the wagons can create perverse results. If a criticism of someone is justified, the target of it can still enjoy more support rather than less from Bush. This is what happened with secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld. The fact that he became such an object of criticism from liberals, the press, and former generals made Bush more likely to keep him than to jettison him. In the course of standing up to the critics in an act of courageous loyalty, Bush did harm to his party and to the cause on which he has staked so much—the war in Iraq.

Bush's reflex to stand by his man points to a key weakness in his management style. If you are going to delegate and avoid getting mired in the details, as Bush does, there has to be accountability beneath you. You have to be even tougher on your subordinates—who had better be very good—than you might be otherwise. Excessive loyalty only enables drift and dysfunction.

LEADER OF THE TEAM

David Brooks wrote a prescient article for *The Weekly Standard* on Bush's management style when he was an owner of the Texas Rangers:

> He didn't try to compensate for his weaknesses—his lack of interest in the nuts and bolts of team operations. He played to his strengths. Uninterested in doing the things he was not good at, he delegated day-to-day management of the club and spent his time on climate control. He was a constant presence in the ballpark, keeping everybody, from the ushers to the players, feeling good about the franchise. His ownership group was an ever shifting stew of between a dozen and two dozen millionaires; he spent a lot of time keeping them happy.

When in 1993 Rangers manager Kevin Kennedy let star outfielder Jose Canseco pitch an inning in a blowout, Canseco hurt his arm and was lost for the season. "I'm not going to second-guess my manager," Bush said, in a statement that, if you substitute "general" for "manager," could have been made about the Iraq War.

Bush's view of presidential leadership makes it even harder for him to admit mistakes and act on them. He considers it a major role of a president—just as he did as a team owner—to project confidence and optimism. And he's right. But Bush can take it too far. When he famously said he didn't read the newspapers, he was partly revealing a psychological strategy to protect himself from the torrent of criticisms that might cause him to appear sour or not so upbeat in public.

Take a president who doesn't like to be discouraged, who has a very tight-knit group of loyalists around him, who values secrecy and hates leaks, and there is bound to be a problem with the flow of information. There is a tendency for all presidents to become isolated, in any case. Jimmy Carter said what he noticed when he became president is that he never again met anyone who hadn't recently bathed. Everything and everyone gets spiffed up and sanitized for a president.

That bad news hasn't gotten to Bush quickly and emphatically enough may account for Bush's poor timing, which seems strange for such an adept politician. On Katrina, the federal government was late by only a day or two. But given the rapidity of the contemporary news cycle, that made the difference. On Iraq, Bush seemed to be practically the last man in America to realize his military strategy was failing. He had clued into it much sooner than everyone knew (working to replace Rumsfeld months before the 2006 election), but acted only when the public had begun to tilt strongly—perhaps decisively—against the war.

Iraq is in a category of its own. More than anything else, it colors the Bush presidency, giving every charge of incompetence extra resonance. A successful executive sets achievable goals, puts in place the right people to achieve them, and establishes a decision-making process that makes their job easier. Bush arguably did none of these in Iraq. Establishing a liberal democracy wasn't achievable (certainly not on the timetable and with the resources envisioned). He had the wrong people attempting to implement the war, beginning with Don Rumsfeld, who didn't truly believe in the policy to begin with and had no idea how to wage an effective counterinsurgency. And the chain of command was so tangled—both in Iraq and in Washington—it's still a mystery how some crucial decisions were made.

In the run-up to the war and its immediate aftermath, planning and execution were hampered by poisonous bureaucratic rivalries within the administration. These kinds of divisions can be healthy, if they lead to the airing and adjudication of rival views. But only if they are managed properly. If not, they lead to an administration feasting on itself, which has often been the case (see Byron York elsewhere in this issue).

Since the election, Bush has reacted appropriately to the failure in Iraq: He fired the defense secretary and generals responsible, formulated a new policy (the surge), and put in place new leaders who believe in it and are capable of implementing it. It is still possible that Bush will turn the war around enough that history won't judge him as harshly as contemporary political observers do.

In a reversal of the usual presidential pattern, Bush's team has gotten more talented in some respects rather than less later in his administration—for instance, Harriet Miers is out as White House counsel, replaced by the respected Washington lawyer Fred Fielding. And a new ethic has taken hold. There was an entirely appropriate round of swift firings in reaction to the Walter Reed scandal. But after six years, the administration can be run perfectly until January 2009 and the charge of incompetence will still bite.

So one thing Republican voters are going to be looking for is a different type of executive from Bush. They will want a manager who is detail-oriented (in contrast to Bush's fondness for delegation), tough (not so reflexively supportive of those in his administration or tolerant of dissension), and proven (in jobs more demanding than part owner of a baseball team or governor in a state where the office is weak). These qualities might prove to have pitfalls of their own, but they play to Giuliani's strengths, and also to those of Mitt Romney. This needn't be determinative, obviously. Many other factors will play a role in the nomination. But the "competence primary" is important, and already raging. **NR**

THE NATION

Freedom House, Rocked

Strange doings at a cherished institution

JOHN J. MILLER

SHORTLY after 9/11, a pair of scholars at Freedom House expressed their dismay with two leading liberal human-rights groups. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch seemed keener to denounce U.S. policies than to condemn terrorism, claimed Adrian Karatnycky and Arch Puddington. Amnesty International, for example, publicly opposed the extradition of Osama bin Laden to the United States—unless he could be guaranteed immunity from the death penalty. "To judge by what [the two groups] have said since September 11, they are far from recognizing the character of the enemy against which the civilized world now finds itself arrayed," they wrote in *Commentary*. "Instead, at the core of their response has been a fear not of that enemy but of the United States."

Karatnycky and Puddington weren't loose cannons with weak links to Freedom House—they were the organization's president and vice president for research, respectively. And Freedom House, which fought Communism tirelessly during the Cold War, didn't exactly have a history of pulling its punches against left-wing radicalism. Yet Karatnycky and Puddington apparently had gone too far: The Freedom House board ordered them not to criticize the behavior of fellow human-rights activists. Their article, once displayed on the group's website, was expunged. Moreover, anything they wrote in the future would require clearance from the board before publication. "They were gagged," says a former Freedom House employee.

Stories like this have led many to ask a simple question: Has Freedom House gone soft? Karatnycky eventually quit Freedom House and Puddington stayed on. Both say that the board acted within its rights, but Karatnycky adds that its choice came with a consequence: "They surrendered something of the essence of what Freedom House had been."

He's not alone in this view. "There's an instinct right now to be cautious—and caution isn't what made us effective in dealing with Poland and the Soviet bloc," observes a current board member. "You have to be able to say things that make people jump up and down." There are several reasons for a growing unease about Freedom House's future, such as the group's increasing dependence on government funding, changes in its leadership, and the ideological drift that often plagues organizations as they age. "Freedom House is at a tipping point," says another former employee. "It's in danger of losing the edgy qualities that have distinguished it and kept it from becoming just another part of the human-rights chorus."

Freedom House certainly has a notable past. Founded by

Eleanor Roosevelt, Wendell Willkie, and others in 1941, it immediately devoted itself to spreading freedom around the world, and specifically to fighting Nazism. During the Cold War, it made anti-Communism a signature cause. Many human-rights organizations shied away from attacking Marxist dictators, preferring instead to target the likes of Chile's Pinochet. Freedom House, however, was an equal-opportunity enemy of tyranny. It allowed Reagan Republicans and Lane Kirkland Democrats to ally on foreign policy, and served the dual purpose of building liberal support for anti-Communism and giving conservatives a vehicle to defend human rights around the globe.

At the end of the Cold War, Freedom House rededicated itself to promoting democracy. A year ago, when President Bush wanted to deliver a speech on Iraq, he chose Freedom House as his forum. "For more than 60 years, this organization has been a tireless champion for liberty," he said. "You've been a clear voice for the oppressed across the world."

CUBA, NORTH KOREA . . . PRE-PELOSI AMERICA?

The group's best-known project is an annual publication called "Freedom in the World," a country-by-country survey that assesses civil liberties and political rights, and rates nations as free, partly free, or not free. The latest rankings, issued in January, contained no surprises: The major developments included advances in Guyana, Haiti, and Nepal as well as setbacks in Congo and Thailand. The primary foes of freedom remain Russia, China, Iran, Cuba, and North Korea. A summary of trends in the United States, however, puzzled many of Freedom House's traditional supporters. It mentioned controversies over wiretaps, torture, and Guantanamo. Then it applauded last November's elections: "Gains made by the opposition Democratic Party in mid-term congressional elections somewhat allayed apprehensions over the level of competitiveness of the country's political process."

Perhaps you didn't realize that before Nancy Pelosi became Speaker of the House, freedom and democracy were in jeopardy. In the past, Freedom House had no complaints when Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter enjoyed Democratic majorities in Congress. Clearly, something had changed, as a list of Freedom House's departed leaders makes clear. Stalwarts such as Penn Kemble and Jeane Kirkpatrick passed away. Several key conservative board members entered the Bush administration, including Paula Dobriansky, Otto Reich, and Peter Rodman. "There aren't a lot of heavy hitters left," complains one insider. When former CIA director James Woolsey stepped down as chairman of the board in 2005, he was replaced by Peter Ackerman, a businessman whose wife serves on the board of Human Rights Watch, the left-wing group that Freedom House employees aren't allowed to criticize in print.

Another problem involves Freedom House's funding. During the Cold War, its financial sources were almost entirely private. Today, the federal government underwrites most of its activities. This is partly a function of the times: In the 1980s, a number of private foundations wanted to support anti-Communist causes; nowadays, far fewer are willing to take on, for instance, programs to improve civil society in Venezuela. When Freedom House hired Jennifer Windsor as its executive director in 2001, it saw her ten years of experience at the grant-making U.S. Agency for International Development as a boon. Last year, Freedom House had a budget of more than $11 million, with about $9 million of it supplied by the federal government.

Such heavy reliance on public largesse carries a steep cost. "Freedom House has radically changed," says Nina Rosenwald, who recently resigned from the board. "Rather than a 'voice for freedom,' it is very little more than a Beltway bandit."

One result is that Freedom House has become hesitant to court controversy. "I don't know anybody who thinks that Freedom House puts forth a strong point of view anymore," says Mal Kemble, widow of Penn. One of her husband's final projects for the organization was the Transatlantic Democracy Network, an initiative launched shortly before the invasion of Iraq. Its purpose was to address disagreements between activists and intellectuals in the United States and Europe, and to encourage them to unite in support of Middle Eastern democracy. Yet it immediately encountered internal resistance at Freedom House. "Nobody was comfortable talking about radical Islam as a new form of totalitarianism," says one activist who was involved in these deliberations. "They thought it had too much of an ideological flavor." The TDN survives, but not as a Freedom House project.

The TDN fiasco is by no means the only sign that Freedom House has lost its way in the Middle East. One of its programs, called New Generation of Advocates, places human-rights activists and journalists from the Arab world at NGOs in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Last fall, a man from Tunisia spent his fellowship at the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, a Washington, D.C.–based group that lobbies against the Patriot Act and advocates an economic boycott of Israel. "Had we known the organization was promoting an aggressive anti-Israel project, we would have placed the New Generation participant elsewhere," says Windsor. Perhaps Freedom House should have taken a look at the group's website, where it publishes formal resolutions.

EXIT CRF

Yet the biggest flap involves the Center for Religious Freedom, which severed its decade-long ties with Freedom House last November. Under the leadership of Nina Shea, the center had operated as a semi-autonomous unit of Freedom House—it raised its own money (entirely from private sources), set its own budget, and determined its own program.

In recent years, Shea has focused much of the center's attention on Islamic radicalism. A report in 2005 examined Saudi publications in the libraries of American mosques and found them full of extremist literature. One tract encouraged Muslims to think of the United States as the "Abode of the Infidel," and urged its readers to be "dissociated from the infidels [and to] hate them for their religion." The cover of this book, found at the King Fahd Mosque in Los Angeles, offered "Greetings from the Cultural Department" of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, D.C. The documents surveyed by the center, wrote Shea, "instill contempt for America" and "preach a Nazi-like hatred for Jews."

The report was immediately controversial—both outside of Freedom House, which was expected, as well as within it, which wasn't. Two weeks after its release, the man who was one of only two Muslims on the Freedom House board resigned in protest. "I am concerned that the growing perception by many Muslims is that this report is biased and will smear the majority of Muslims in the U.S.," wrote Farooq Kathwari, who is also the CEO of Ethan Allen Interiors, a furniture company that does business in Saudi Arabia. Within a few months, however, Ackerman had persuaded Kathwari to rejoin the board—"with assurances that Center reporting on Saudi Arabia would be vetted through him in the future and the Center would be brought under tight control," according to Rosenwald.

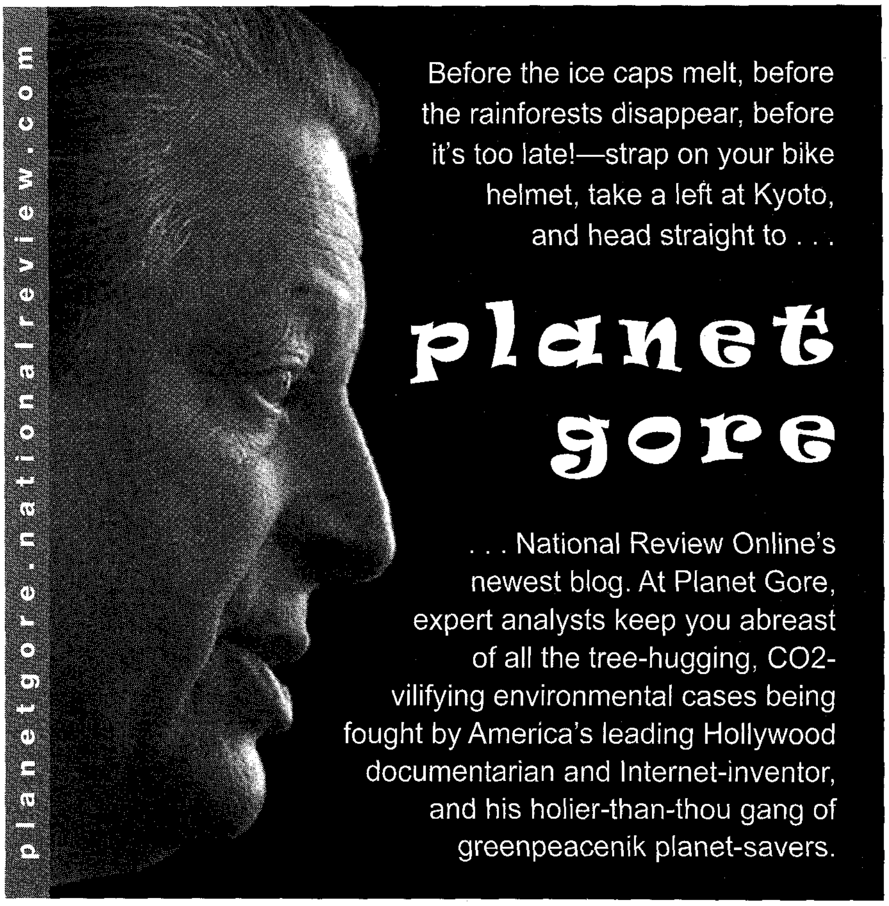
That opportunity arose early last year, as Shea finalized a report on textbooks used in the public schools of Saudi Arabia—a report that would accuse them of advancing "an ideology of hatred toward Christians and Jews and Muslims who do not follow Wahhabi [i.e., radical] doctrine." The documents under review included only those that the Saudi government claimed to have survived a review in 2004, following a review that was supposed to remove older books that delivered messages of religious intolerance and incitements to violence. Yet even the new and improved books announced that "every religion other than Islam is false," taught that the afterlife for non-Muslims is "hellfire," and described Jewish people as "cursed" by God.

Before the center's report saw the light of day, Shea once again locked horns with Freedom House's leadership. "They placed tremendous pressure on me to include only the bare facts and to drop human-rights assessments about the Saudis' violation of religious freedom," she says. Windsor agrees that she wanted Shea to avoid excessive commentary: "I felt that the report on mosques a year earlier had exaggerated the case and left Freedom House vulnerable to some legitimate criticism, so we wanted to edit the new report to enhance its credibility." Trustee P.J. O'Rourke, the writer, backed Windsor. "The Saudi material was so bad, it could stand on its own," he says. Despite the wrangling, the final product was a big success. The center's revelations received wide publicity and led directly to an agreement between the United States and Saudi Arabia last July in which the Saudis promised, once again, to revise their educational materials.

Yet Shea had found the experience so frustrating that she began to wonder whether the Center for Religious Freedom could continue to operate under the Freedom House umbrella. When Freedom House set about centralizing its operations, it removed more of the autonomy that the center had previously enjoyed. In an e-mail that Freedom House counsel Richard Sauber sent to Shea last September, Shea was informed that everything she wrote, including op-eds and online statements, would have to receive organizational approval. Moreover, Shea was told not to hold meetings with government officials, members of Congress, or representatives of international organizations without first notifying Windsor.

"I could see that with the new priority on avoiding controversy, the space we would have to speak truth to power was going to become very narrow," says Shea. She informed the Freedom House board of her intention to leave. "Nina Shea's departure is a real blow," says a trustee. "Her center was one of the best things about Freedom House."

Now it promises to be one of the best things about the Hudson Institute, where Shea plans to continue her efforts to expose Islamic radicalism. Freedom House, for its part, is hard at work on its next major report, which is tentatively called "Today's America: How Free?" If the project stays on schedule, we'll learn how free we are this June. **NR**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CULTURE WATCH

Who's Got a Secret?

The whole world has *The Secret*, sadly

JASON LEE STEORTS

DE *gustibus non est disputandum*, yeah yeah, but there's also no disputing that the world is full of fools. How else to explain the phenomenal success of *The Secret*?

The Secret isn't much of a secret, but here's an executive summary in case you've missed it. An Australian TV producer named Rhonda Byrne recently began moonlighting as prophetess-in-the-desert. In this more exalted station she made a film and wrote a book, both called *The Secret* and both claiming to reveal The Secret. The Secret to what? Why, to everything: wealth, health, relationships, happiness, world peace. Want to be a millionaire next month? Consult *The Secret*. Feel like eating whatever you wish and having 8 percent body fat? It's in *The Secret*. Need to re-grow that diseased kidney? *The Secret* tells you how.

This Secret works according to something called the law of attraction, which governs the Universe (a word always capitalized by Ms. Byrne, who uses it much as a Christian or a Jew would use "God"). "The law of attraction says *like attracts like*, and so as you think a thought, you are also attracting *like* thoughts to yourself." Not merely thoughts: "If you can think about what you want in your mind, and make that your dominant thought, you *will* bring it into your life. . . . Your thoughts become things!"

Interpreted metaphorically, this would be indistinguishable from the drivel of a thousand and one motivational speakers. But Byrne is making a metaphysical claim: "Thoughts are magnetic, and thoughts have a frequency. As you think, those thoughts are sent out into the Universe, and they magnetically attract all *like* things that are on the same frequency. Everything sent out returns to the source. And that source is You."

The Universe, then, will give Me whatever I want if only I think about it with sufficient frequency and intensity. It makes no difference whether my wish is good or bad. "The law of attraction . . . is as impartial and impersonal as the law of gravity." It is "the mightiest power in the Universe." It is also colossally stupid: "The law of attraction doesn't compute 'don't' or 'not' or 'no,' or any other words of negation"—so if I think, "I don't want to catch the flu," I'm actually telling the Universe, "I want the flu and I want to catch more things." (The example is Byrne's.)

There is no limit to the audacity of the conclusions Byrne draws from her silly little premise. "Write out your perfect weight and place it over the readout of your scale, or don't weigh yourself at all." That's Byrne's advice on how to svelten up, since, you know, obesity comes from "thinking 'fat thoughts.'" To enrich yourself, go to *The Secret*'s website and download a "check" from the Bank of the Universe. Fill out this check with the amount of money you'd like to have, put it somewhere you'll see it regularly, and you'll be on the *Forbes* list in no time. We meet a woman who cured her breast cancer by "watch[ing] very funny movies" and "believ[ing] in [her] heart that [she] was healed." (She received no chemotherapy or radiation treatment, we are told. Elsewhere, Byrne says medicine is okay, but only for its instrumental value in "eliminat[ing] pain, which then allows the person to be able to focus with great force on health.") Whatever you do, don't think about *how* to achieve your goals: "When you are trying to work out *how* it will happen, you are emitting a frequency that contains a lack of faith. . . . The *how* is not your part in the Creative Process."

There are 3.75 million copies of this nonsense in print. Oprah Winfrey devoted two shows to it. I had an impossible time even buying the book, as it was sold out at every Barnes & Noble and every Borders in Manhattan. *The Secret* is the top-selling book and the top-selling DVD on Amazon.com. Ms. Byrne has no doubt become a very rich woman.

No one seems much to mind the intellectual quagmire her system produces. How about conflicting wills? If two people want the same house, does the Universe reward whoever covets it more? Can I steal another man's wife? Then there's evil. Can I make the heavens rain woe upon my enemy? "You cannot create other people's lives for them," Byrne writes. Yet much of what she promises—professional success, the relationship of my dreams, an end to war and strife—depends on contingencies of other persons' lives, as well as their desires and actions. Where is the limit?

And if everything in my life is there because I attracted it, does this mean that all the misfortunes I suffer are my own doing—that the very word "misfortune" is nonsensical? Here Byrne is consistent to the point of repugnance:

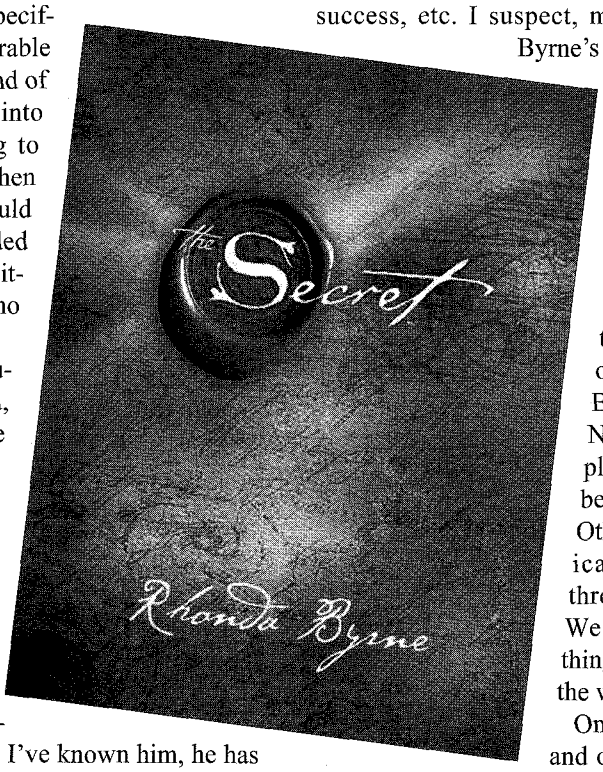
> Often when people first hear this part of the Secret [i.e., that one has attracted everything in one's life] they recall events in history where masses of lives were lost, and they find it incomprehensible that so many people could have attracted themselves to the event. By the law of attraction, they had to be on the same frequency as the event. It doesn't necessarily mean they thought of that exact event, but the frequency of their thoughts matched the frequency of the event.

So those six million Jews had it coming, huh Rhonda?

ELITE COMPANY

The really interesting question about *The Secret* is why so many people believe it. Part of the answer must be Byrne's promotional genius. She gives us the frisson of a conspiracy: "The leaders in the past who had The Secret wanted to keep the power and not share the power," says one of the self-help gurus in her film. She also flatters us. Shakespeare knew The Secret. So did Beethoven, Leonardo, Socrates, Plato, Goethe, Newton, and Einstein. Pretty impressive crowd—and now we're in (though I myself would liken Byrne not to Socrates but to the Sophists, who, for a fee, taught their students to exploit rhetoric for worldly gain). Finally, she's not the type to blush. Most of the "teachers" she quotes are run-of-the-mill motivational speakers, but she sexes them up with titles such as "visionary" and "philosopher." One guy gets to be both a "metaphysician" and a "marketing specialist." (Imagine what he'd have done for Spinoza's book sales.)

I suspect, however, that *The Secret*'s appeal runs deeper than all this. Byrne isn't selling a system of ideas so much as a New Age gnosis, and her dogmas are tailored perfectly to the sentimental permissiveness of the country in which she has found her greatest success.



I first began to wonder whether a specific kind of person is especially vulnerable to Byrne's enchantments when a friend of mine described his plan for getting into shape with The Secret. "I'm going to attract a sixpack," he proclaimed. When I faithlessly asked whether his abs could use some time in the gym, he conceded that yes, he might have to do a few sit-ups—"but not as many as someone who isn't putting it out there."

Now this friend is by no means stupid. He has a clever and agile mind, and would probably get a high score on an IQ test. At the same time, he has one of the most aggressively anti-philosophical temperaments I have ever encountered. Thought bores him endlessly; he prefers to feel his way through each day. He is full of religious sentiment, having been raised in a family of believers; but, being homosexual, he is now estranged from the faith. For as long as I've known him, he has experienced life as a series of crises—personal, financial, professional—and has scanned the horizon for a Great Escape.

Byrne's ideal target is probably quite like my friend. The archetypal Secreteer is sentimental and engrossed in practical affairs. Possibly he is a bit desperate with circumstance. He hasn't the consistency to apply the doctrine of personal responsibility inherent in *The Secret* to himself or anyone else, and therefore remains blandly liberal. He may have been conventionally religious once upon a time, but eventually he chafed under religion's constraints and rebelled against its tendency to exclude large swaths of mankind from the ranks of the blessed. But he hasn't studied enough science or philosophy to question the existence of nonmaterial powers: so now he is "spiritual."

What Byrne offers our Secreteer is the assurance that anyone can be wealthy and healthy and happy without the nuisance of hard work or scholarship or moral boundaries or tradition. The whole brotherhood of man is invited to the Universe's party, and everybody gets to be the guest of honor. "The earth turns on its orbit for You," Byrne coos in her peroration. "The oceans ebb and flow for You. The birds sing for You. . . . You are the master of the Universe. You are the heir to the kingdom. You are the perfection of Life."

At the risk of sounding pedantic, I note that birds occasionally sing without me. Byrne of course might not insist that we take her pretty mantras literally. But she has done her best to persuade us that the Universe orders and reorders itself as we wish. Would it hurt to believe her?

Somewhere out there a cancer patient is editing his Netflix queue and thinking happy thoughts. On the other hand, I suspect that many of Byrne's followers simultaneously accept and ignore her metaphysical claims, focusing only on her endorsement of positive thinking. This may serve them well, since optimism tends to produce confidence, decisiveness, social success, etc. I suspect, moreover, that those who do take Byrne's metaphysics seriously dilute it with a heavy dose of common sense. In an online discussion group devoted to *The Secret*, I find Ms. Georgi Georgi, a Toronto-based "spiritual psychotherapist" with whom I end up having a long phone conversation. In her delightful Hungarian accent, she tells me that she has been teaching the law of attraction for years and finds Byrne's presentation incomplete. Not all things are possible, she explains. Shaquille O'Neal is too big to be a jockey in the Kentucky Derby. Other desires are fulfilled metaphorically: I can live forever, but only through my descendants or my work. We should wish only for positive things, and we should try to bring about the well-being of others.

One could get worse advice than this, and one could pick a worse role model than Ms. Georgi Georgi, who laughs often, speaks kindly, and thinks clearly within her intellectual framework. Sufficiently talented theologians could probably refine her version of The Secret into a body of thought no more or less absurd than any religion. It is not obviously less reasonable to believe in a natural law by which our wishes are fulfilled than it is to believe in a supernatural being who grants our wishes as he sees fit. The law of attraction has the added advantage of possessing neither a will nor a capacity for benevolence and malice. It needs no theodicy to disembarrass it.

For my part, I would like very much to shout hosannas in the Temple of the Secreteers. It would be comforting to think my little mind capable of yoking some starry omnipotence. I would get myself a sixpack, and more. There comes a time, however, to decide whether one can adopt beliefs in the absence of sufficient reasons for thinking them true. I say no. That answer nudges me toward the suspicion that this universe—no majuscule, please—is rather colder and darker than I hope. Yet there is something to be said for the dubious comforts of honesty. **NR**

the bent pin

FLORENCE KING

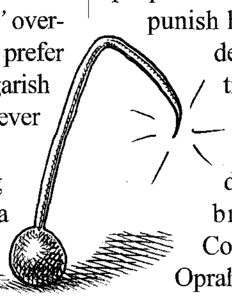
For Whom the Bell (Really) Tolls

THE air is thick with high-minded complaints that the Anna Nicole Smith story dominated the news and distracted us from what C-SPAN junkies reverently call "the issues." Media figures are even complaining about themselves for covering it so obsessively, and now they need to rationalize why they did it. The talk-show schedulers will round up the usual pundits, who will furrow their brows and explain that fame itself, like fear itself, does the most damage when it is ubiquitous. Therefore, analyzing the condition known as "famous for being famous" and its impact on the 15-minute birthright bestowed on each of us by Founding Father Andy Warhol was the motivating principle behind their wall-to-wall coverage.

Not even close. What fascinated them and us about Anna Nicole Smith was not Smith herself, but the other woman, the one she killed off. It was this woman, not Smith, who finally got buried. It is she, not Smith, who will be missed because she really was famous, not just for the brief span of one lifetime, but for centuries. She was a cultural archetype of the Christian Western world who went on to become a cornerstone of sexual psychology when the Victorian era replaced the medieval witch with the prostitute. I'm talking about the beloved infidel of Central Casting, the stock character in our collective subconscious: the Whore with a Heart of Gold.

I happen to know something about her, having been raised by a grandmother who remembered the many popular songs about her and sang them to me. From the Gay Nineties to the early years of the 20th century, Tin Pan Alley was the main thoroughfare for streetwalkers, where you met *"a woman in tears from the crowd's angry jeers"* on one corner, *"Nelly's not to blame for her smile is just the same"* on the next, and *"a wild sort of devil but dead on the level"* when you ran into everybody's gal Sal.

As I watched the Anna Nicole Smith coverage I was struck by how thoroughly she demolished each one of these sentimental ballads, turned it inside out and backwards, and stood it on its head. The extent to which she did not fit the lyrics was uncanny. Even what ought to be her signature song makes no sense with her in it. *"Her beauty was sold for an old man's gold, she's a bird in a gilded cage"* overlooks the fact that she seemed to prefer gilded cages, moving from one garish hotel to another, and once inside, never left unless she had a court date.



The same was true of the song about the letter forwarded to a brothel. *"And sadder she seems when of Mother she dreams in the mansion of aching hearts"* lost everything in translation when a tape-recorded Smith, her lip literally curling, snarled and growled that she hated Virgie Arthur and called her another Mommy Dearest.

Anna Nicole Smith had a baby. The Whore with a Heart of Gold also had a baby, but the resemblance ends there. *"Just then the church door opened, the wedding guests turned 'round, and seeing the intruder, they dared not make a sound. 'Stop!' the ragged woman cried, 'my story must be told. The bridegroom is the father of this dead child that I hold!'"*

The Whore with a Heart of Gold was always *"more to be pitied than censured"* because nothing was ever her fault. *"Do not scorn her with words fierce and bitter, do not laugh at her shame and downfall, for a moment just stop and consider that a man was the cause of it all."* A man? Show me one man in Smith's housebroken entourage of eunuchoid sycophants. She didn't suffer at the hands of feminism's brutal patriarchy, they suffered at hers. From the very beginning she always looked for some weakness in men or some symbol of authority or dominance in herself. The chicken-frying teenage first husband (a year younger than she), the physically feeble sugar daddy, the middle-aged lawyer supported by his parents, the hunky bodyguards who waited on her hand and foot, and "soft-spoken" Larry Birkhead, who shriveled up in an apologetic heap when she berated him in a vicious screaming tirade for bringing her the wrong sunglasses. A real man would have belted her, but how can you belt a 5'11" harpy with DD bazooms? I'll bet you anything she didn't get those implants to be sexy, but to be *big*. There's a difference.

Anna Nicole Smith pulled our fantasy of the Whore with a Heart of Gold out from under us and sent us sprawling in a psychological pratfall. We don't like people who rob us of our fantasies. To punish her the commentary on her death and post-mortem activities was frequently mocking and occasionally even cold. In fact, nobody in the media descended to the usual lugubrious excess except Rita Cosby, herself the Great White Oprah, who asked a funeral guest, "How did you feel when you touched the coffin?"

Instead, the phrase "famous for being famous" was repeated incessantly and scornfully, and male commentators stressed "Marilyn Monroe had *talent*" more times than Monroe ever heard men say it in her lifetime. Most significant, for the first time the phrase "that quality of vulnerability" was absent from all discussion of the death of a young, blond sex goddess. It has been a staple for decades, but this time, nobody to my knowledge said it.

The Whore with a Heart of Gold was a Sunday sermon delivered at the vaudeville show and the movies instead of in church. So much in her imagery was tied up in the New Testament that she became a remedial spiritual guide for the masses, a kind of "Dichotomy for Dummies" who helped us grasp the knotty principle of dueling incarnations while at the same time entertaining us, until we were able to look for the good in bad people and believe in the power of redemption without putting too much strain on our intellects. Anna Nicole Smith could not do this because she was the "ho" of today's popular songs. **NR**

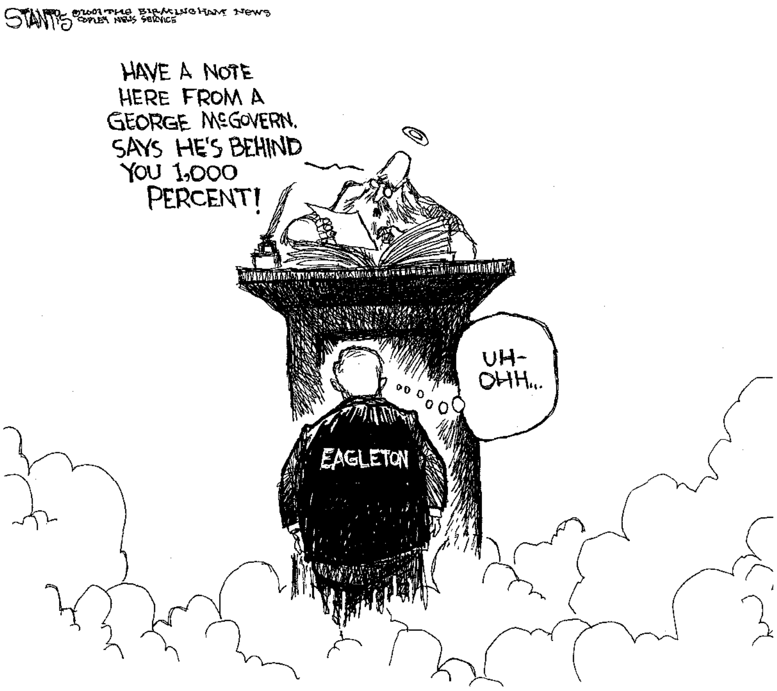
Florence King can be reached at P.O. Box 7113, Fredericksburg, VA 22404.

HELP!!!!

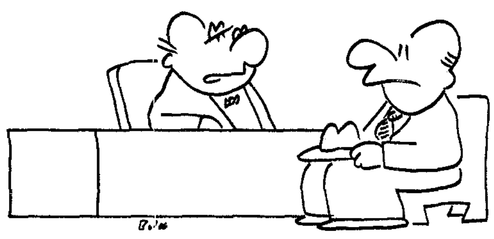
DOWN MEMORY LANE

'Twas only 13 years ago
That Hillarycare, a no-show
To everyone but bug-eyed Hill,
Faw down go boom like Jack and Jill;
Now once again she scares the hell
Out of the farmer in the dell,
Bo-Peep, and queasy Mother Goose.
Miss Muffet's mien is shocking puce.

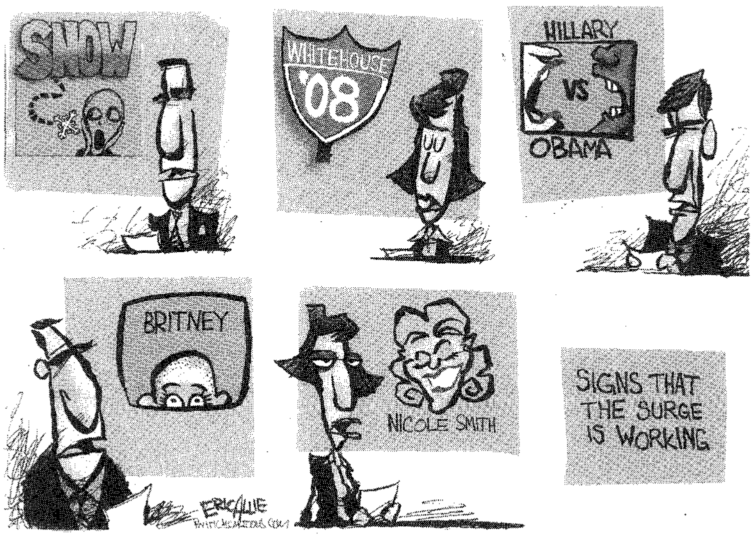
—W. H. VON DREELE

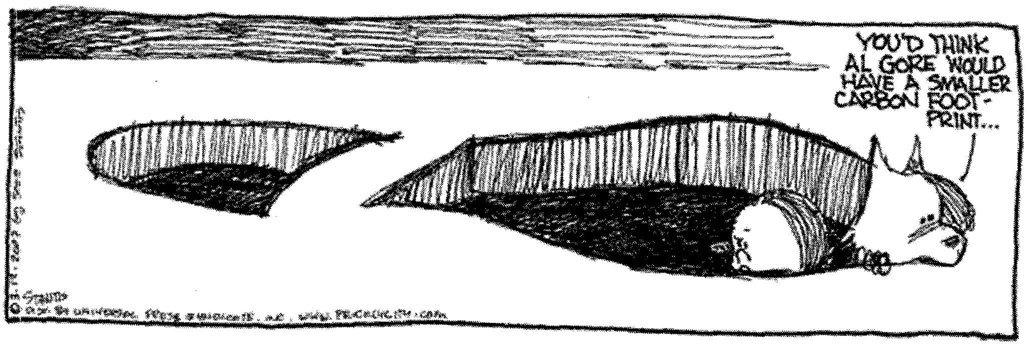

STANTIS ©2007 THE BIRMINGHAM NEWS COPLEY NEWS SERVICE
HAVE A NOTE HERE FROM A GEORGE McGOVERN. SAYS HE'S BEHIND YOU 1,000 PERCENT!
UH-OHH...
EAGLETON

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS



"Wholesome, upbeat, worthwhile art?—We leave that sort of thing to the private sector."


SNOW
WHITEHOUSE '08
HILLARY VS OBAMA
BRITNEY
NICOLE SMITH
SIGNS THAT THE SURGE IS WORKING
ERIC ALLIE


YOU'D THINK AL GORE WOULD HAVE A SMALLER CARBON FOOT-PRINT...
STANTIS

the long view

ROB LONG

THERAPIST'S NOTES

COURT-ORDERED REHABILITATION FOR HATE SPEECH

PATIENT: COULTER, ANN

First Session:

The patient arrives on time, displays pleasant and agreeable affect. She is charming and complimentary about therapist's office, calling it cozy. She asks if the therapist decorated it himself, and when told that he didn't, remarks that she should have known as he doesn't seem gay. Therapist asks why patient instantly assumes that interior decorators are invariably gay. Patient apologizes for the stereotyped response. "I guess this is why I'm here," she says with great sincerity. "I need to learn how to better express myself. I need to learn to stop saying things that upset so many people, to stop saying such hurtful things, using such hateful language. This is going to be a difficult and painful journey for me, I know. But together, I hope we can get to the bottom of it." Therapist compliments patient on her positive attitude. Patient and therapist share a healing hug. "So let me rephrase my statement, if that's okay," patient says. "All interior decorators are not gay—only the good ones are." Patient then bursts out into gales of laughter, points at therapist, and shouts "PSYCH!"

No progress during this session.

Second Session:

We move to a group-encounter experience. The patient is encouraged to engage the group—consisting of a dozen participants, some clearly homosexual, others merely avid environmentalists included as "gay decoys." Within minutes, patient has identified the decoy environmentalists, and has reduced several of them to tears. They exit angrily, leaving only the patient and eight or so homosexuals. The conversation quickly evolves into an unproductive conversation between patient and the remaining homosexuals in which all agree that the Prius is the most unattractive automobile on the road today, and that any man—homosexual or heterosexual—who drives one can be safely called a "f*g." When reminded that the therapist himself drives a Prius in solidarity with the green movement and Planet Earth, patient and remaining homosexuals erupt into hurtful giggles. Therapist reminds homosexuals that the patient is here in therapeutic rehabilitation to learn better, less hateful and hurtful ways to communicate. "I was kidding!" shouts the patient. "I used the word as a joke!" Therapist reminds the patient that humor is often the most hateful form of communication, and is therefore best avoided. "But they use that word all the time," she says, pointing to the homosexuals. The homosexuals agree that this is an important issue, but the truth is, they were all wondering about John Edwards anyway. Patient promises to dish over drinks. Patient and homosexuals leave together, leaving therapist in office.

No progress during this session.

Third Session:

Patient arrives on time, upbeat about a new book deal. Patient and therapist talk about this for a moment. Patient is reluctant to share details of the book. Apparently, a more "stealth" approach to book topics is the norm these days. Still, the patient is reminded that the therapeutic environment is a "safe space," where anything can be shared in total confidence. "Really?" the patient asks. The therapist assures her that anything she says or does within the therapeutic frame is sacred and totally confidential. "Like, if I said the word f*gg*t? That would be okay?" The patient is reminded that one of the reasons she is currently undergoing court-ordered rehabilitation is precisely because of such language. "So this is a safe space where I can say anything I want unless it's what I'm in the safe space for in the first place? Am I the only one to realize that this makes no sense?" The therapist tries once again to explain to the patient that she is here primarily because she seems incapable of not saying whatever is in her mind, irrespective of social norms.

Patient laughs, and remarks that one of the ways to get on the bestseller lists is to speak your mind, then inquires about how the therapist's own book, *On Being Nice*, is doing at the stores. Therapist suggests that they concentrate on the patient and the patient's book. "That bad, huh?" asks the patient. "Suggestion? Try writing an interesting book. Those usually move faster."

No progress during this session.

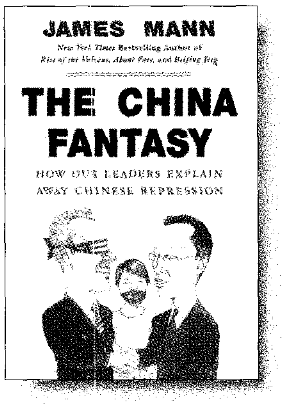
Fourth Session:

Patient misses the session, and instead appears on *Hannity & Colmes* to introduce her new book, entitled *Rehab Is for Quitters*, in which she promises to expose the "unbelievable liberal nonsense" of the entire rehabilitation-therapy movement. By show's end, Amazon presales hit record highs, far outpacing therapist's own *On Being Nice*, which languishes at 12,978,675.

No progress during this session.

books, arts & manners

China Dreamin'


JAMES MANN
New York Times Bestselling Author of Rise of the Vulcans, About Face, and Beijing Jeep
THE CHINA FANTASY
HOW OUR LEADERS EXPLAIN AWAY CHINESE REPRESSION

The China Fantasy: How Our Leaders Explain Away Chinese Repression, by James Mann (Viking, 127 pp., $19.95)

JAY NORDLINGER

THIS is a short book, but an invaluable one. Every word counts, and the topic is one of the most important of our time. James Mann headed the Beijing bureau of the *Los Angeles Times*, and this is his third book about China. He has also written *Rise of the Vulcans*, about George W. Bush's "war cabinet." It is correct to call Mann a China watcher; it is equally correct to call him a watcher of the China watchers.

In his introduction to *The China Fantasy*, Mann is at pains to explain that his book is not a book "about China itself." Rather, it is a book about "the China I have encountered outside of China"—in the State Department, the CIA, the Council on Foreign Relations, the universities, the media, and so on. He intends to take us on a tour of "America's China."

Mann's core contention is that, "over many years, a collection of ideas, phrases, rationalizations, and doctrines has emerged, all of which serve to deflect attention from the persistence of China's one-party state and its repression of political dissent." There is, in fact, a party line in this country about China—a line shared by Democrats and Republicans alike. The author puts serious pressure on this line.

He also asks an alarming question: Do we like it that way? That is, does America, particularly the top echelon, like China just the way it is, repressive, relatively predictable, and (for some) profitable?

In Chapter 1, Mann discusses "The Soothing Scenario." You know this scenario well: China is marching toward democratization, inevitably; we simply have to let it happen. If the PRC does something gross—conspicuous torture, murder—relax. Think of the economic progress that has been made. Take the long view. The road may be bumpy, but the destination of a decent and democratic society will be reached.

When I first interviewed her in 1999, Condoleezza Rice said, "Economic liberalization is ultimately going to lead to political liberalization—that's an iron law." She also said that the Chinese Communists "are living on borrowed time." Yet one may well wonder: Is that law made of something slightly less rigid than iron? And how many more decades might the Communists borrow?

While president, Bill Clinton said that a Chinese spring would come just as surely as the Berlin Wall fell. (We could also debate how sure a thing the fall of that wall was.) In a 1999 book, Thomas L. Friedman said, "China's going to have a free press. Globalization will drive it." We could quote such confident declarations all day long.

But we might also pause to ask: How's it going? How goes the cause of rights in China? Very, very badly. The PRC is exercising suppression with great vigor, and to hardly any objection from the outside world. Now and then, a case may bubble to the surface—the aforementioned conspicuous event (torture, murder). And then we meet our old friend "Two Steps Forward, One Step Back."

The *New York Times* actually used that in a headline: DEMOCRACY, CHINESE STYLE: 2 STEPS FORWARD, 1 STEP BACK. Regardless of what the PRC does to a human being, or to a group, it is merely "one step back" on our inevitable (forward) march. Thus, says Mann, "even unpleasant news about Chinese repression tends to be safely embedded in an assumption of progress, a soft, warm, gauzy wrapping of hopefulness."

Mark Steyn says he sometimes wonders what the Palestinians can do to get a bad press. You might ask the same question about Beijing.

And we hear a soothing scenario with respect to Iran, too: Hang out in the right circles—Davos will do—and you will hear, "Ahmadinejad is a lot of hot air, not to be taken too seriously. He's a politician, after all, like other politicians. And he does not have control of the nuclear program—more sober officials do. We must not demonize Iran. Welcome them into the world community, and they will behave responsibly."

Where China is concerned, the beauty of the Soothing Scenario is that it can never really be disproven. Mann puts it this way: "If you claim that democracy will come inexorably to China someday, far off in the future, through the workings of broad historical forces and the magic of trade, then you are off the hook"—it makes no difference what happens on the ground in China; that bright morning is coming.

There is also the Upheaval Scenario. This one predicts that "China is headed for some sort of disaster, such as an economic collapse or political disintegration, because it won't be able to maintain political stability while continuing on its current course." (I am quoting Mann.) Your average China hand greatly, greatly fears instability. And our author is persuasive in explaining why the Upheaval Scenario is unlikely. For Chinese democrats, Communist rule is all too stable.

Mann offers a Third Scenario, which has China becoming ever wealthier and more powerful, while remaining a one-party dictatorship. Sure, the ruling party—the one party—may change its name, even as the Propaganda Department became the Department of Publicity (in 1998). But the same old rule would be in place, a Berlin Wall perpetually up, though looking great with capitalist paint.

We next study the "Lexicon of Dismissal," a list of about ten words and phrases. At the top is *China basher*, or *China bashing*. This applies to just about any criticism of the Communist government. And it indicates that the critic has some sort of personal hang-up.

Then there is *cold war mentality*, which is ironic, as Mann says: China was "the principal *beneficiary* of American policy during the last two decades of the cold war"—the U.S. was eagerly checking the Soviet Union. He further writes,

> In the end, the phrase *cold war mentality* is something of a verbal trick. The true historical anachronism is China's Leninist political system, and it is this repressive system that is the principal source of opposition to China in the United States. But the phrase *cold war mentality* wrongly suggests that *opposition* to Leninism is somehow out-of-date, rather than the Chinese political system itself.

Elsewhere in the lexicon we have the delicious *If we treat China as a threat, it will become a threat.* (You hear that about Iran too.) Hush, now, don't anger the (panda) bear. If you shake the hand of some Taiwanese democrat, or mention a dissident in a dungeon, you may set off a world war.

Mann goes on to discuss China's economy, its demographics, the aspirations of its people (to the extent those aspirations can be learned). Some people maintain that the Chinese simply don't want democracy; when they have been given the chance to prove otherwise, however, they have.

This little book will sharpen the minds and tongues of the China watchers and debaters no matter where they stand.

Mann also shows how the PRC plays the Western press like a violin—sickening, really, the gullibility of our journalists. And it may not be gullibility: In some cases, our journalists frankly admire China's mailed fist.

Then he reaches the subject of lucre, much of it filthy: "The proclivity of American elites to refrain from public criticism of China's repressive system is reinforced all the more by the influence of money. There are huge and growing financial incentives for prominent Americans to support the status quo in China . . ." Liberals used to sneer at the "China lobby," which was made up of right-wingers fond of Chiang Kai-shek. Later that lobby became the "Taiwan lobby," equally disreputable. There is still a lobby, and it is decidedly PRC-friendly.

Those who deal with Beijing may have sound reasons for doing so—but they should not necessarily flatter themselves that they are helping the cause of democracy. Their dealings may be legitimate, but something other than idealistic.

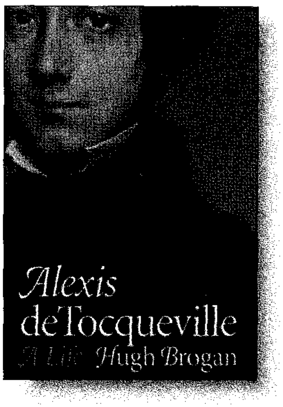
In a chapter on presidents—Nixon, the Great Opener, through to the incumbent—Mann spends some time on "engagement," the guiding star of U.S. policy. Engagers like me have to confront what Mann says, and what the historical record has to say. What has our engaging done, and what might it do in the future, and is engagement for its own sake a virtue?

One of the most interesting chapters of this book is on the Beijing Olympics, which will take place in the summer of 2008. Mann tells us how the world press will cover the Games—sort of pre-covers them. China will be portrayed as cute, cuddly, exotic. Inscrutable. And the government has adopted official mascots for the Games: the Five Friendlies, which are adorable little cartoon dolls, "carrying a message of friendship and peace." (So says the government's website.) Yes, the Olympics look set to be a big propaganda victory for Beijing.

And China's rulers are cutting an ever wider swath through the world. Not least, they are bucking up dictatorships all over—in Sudan and Zimbabwe, for example. Beijing helped Mugabe crack down on Internet use, just as Western companies have helped Beijing do the same. This is a form of globalization. In his final chapter, Mann asks a key question, and you might even call it a brutal one: "Who's integrating whom?" In other words, is the world changing China, or is China changing the world?

This little book, *The China Fantasy*, is worth more than many fat tomes. It will sharpen the minds and tongues of the China watchers and debaters no matter where they stand. If you can refute it, refute it. If not—ponder the book all the more. Most important, we should be realistic; because the China problem demands no less. **NR**

Virtue's Aristocrat



Alexis de Tocqueville: A Life,
by Hugh Brogan
(Yale, 736 pp., $35)

M. D. AESCHLIMAN

THIRTY years ago, in surveying the history of Tocqueville scholarship, the distinguished sociologist Robert Nisbet noted that in seven years as an undergraduate and graduate student in social sciences at Berkeley in the 1930s he "did not once hear the name Tocqueville in class or seminar." But the calamitous history of the world in that decade was already leading academe to revise its low estimate of the French thinker: By 1940 important studies of Tocqueville, essay-length and book-length, had been published by G. W. Pierson, J. P. Mayer, and Albert Salomon. From the 1950s through the 1970s, such leading figures as Nisbet, Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, Raymond Aron, and John Lukacs persistently drew on and demonstrated Tocqueville's genius and relevance to our calamitous age. Lukacs's publication in 1959 of Tocqueville's *"The European Revolution" and Correspondence with Gobineau* was a particularly vital addition to the Tocqueville corpus in

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Mr. Aeschliman is professor of education at Boston University, adjunct professor of English at the University of Italian Switzerland, and author of The Restitution of Man: C. S. Lewis and the Case Against Scientism.

English, movingly revealing his hatred of "scientific" racism.

In 1984 André Jardin's great biography of Tocqueville appeared in French, and now we have, rightly built on it, Hugh Brogan's *Life*, an outstanding, exhaustive, nicely written account that has been many years in preparation. (We also finally have good translations of *Democracy in America*, by Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, and of *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, by Alan Kahan; for both, we are indebted to the University of Chicago Press.)

In the tortured and treacherous political, intellectual, and moral history of France since 1750, Tocqueville stands out as a beacon of sanity, integrity, and profound prudence and wisdom. He was utterly unlike his cultural predecessors, the feckless aristocratic and "philosophical" libertines of the 18th century, of whom Burke wrote in 1790 that "they had countenanced too much that licentious philosophy" that "helped to bring on their ruin" in the French Revolution that began in 1789. But Tocqueville was also utterly unlike his successors, the French *clercs* of the 20th century: the voluble, mercurial, nihilistic intellectuals of whom Bernard-Henri Lévy has given an amazingly embarrassing portrait in *Adventures on the Freedom Road* (1991), and about whom Renee Winegarten, Roger Kimball, and David Lehman have also written. Lehman's *Signs of the Times: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man* (1991) is a crucial document of intellectual history, and a fit successor to Tocqueville's mordant chapter in *The Old Regime and the Revolution* bearing the ironic title "How Around the Middle of the 18th Century [France's] Intellectuals Became the Country's Leading Politicians, and the Effects Which Resulted from This."

Tocqueville's intellectual mentors were the austere Christian Pascal ("his favorite author," says Brogan), Montesquieu, Burke, and the French Protestant historian François Guizot (1787–1874), his older contemporary. In 1828 the young Tocqueville heard Guizot's lectures at the Sorbonne, later published as *The History of Civilization in Europe*, which Oxford professor Larry Siedentop has recently called "the most intelligent general history of Europe ever written." Tocqueville's own two subsequent great books are certainly among the greatest commentaries on modern civilization ever written, indispensable and profound.

But if Tocqueville was an intellectual, he was an aristocratic intellectual rooted in a landed class that he saw and felt to be disappearing. He was born in 1805; members of the two preceding generations of his family were put to death in the sanguinary revolution and others, including his parents, were temporarily imprisoned by it. He was raised among throne-and-altar aristocrats and monarchists, yet unlike most aristocratic reactionaries of his time—often as ostentatiously pious and Catholic as their 18th-century predecessors had been skeptical and libertine—Tocqueville saw the corruption of his class, its hypocritical religious-moral taint thinly hiding gross self-interest in a monarchist restoration. Tocqueville clearly saw and generally avoided, as historian, moralist, and politician, what Kant called "the radical evil"—the use of the language of ethics as a screen or tool for self-love and self-interest. "No one disputes that the French aristocracy of the [18th] century was very dissolute," Tocqueville wrote in *Democracy in America*; he came to see the hypocritical, moralizing self-interest of the possessing classes in 19th-century France—whether their politics were Bourbon "legitimist," Orleanist, or Bonapartist—in much the same way.

Tocqueville's love of liberty, like that of Burke, the Federalists, and Lincoln, asserts the existence of human liberty in a moral universe.

One of the many merits of Hugh Brogan's biography is to show, more judiciously than any Marxist cartoonist ever has, the pervasiveness of this evil in the French landed and moneyed classes, a pervasiveness evident in the novels of Balzac, Stendhal, and Flaubert, and one that Jacques Maritain was to mention as characteristic of the haughty and cynical French Right up into the 1930s and 1940s. Nor does Brogan varnish Tocqueville's own record in this regard: He was a man of his class, capable of gross insensitivity to the lower depths, especially the urban poor and industrial workers.

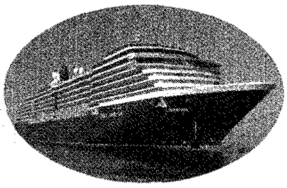
But it was precisely one of Tocqueville's greatest insights that although human beings are not *determined* creatures, we are *conditioned* ones. The astonishing intellectual-moral achievement of Tocqueville, as Jacques Barzun has pointed out, was to understand the human person as having not only a conditioned free will but a conditional one. (Dostoevsky's depiction of this moral-epistemological fact in fiction puts him in a class of genius far beyond any 19th-century French novelist.) Tocqueville's love of liberty, like that of Burke, the Federalists, and Lincoln, asserts the existence of human liberty in a moral universe, within a providential, theistic framework. Tocqueville avoids the extremes of both determinism/fatalism (Islam, Spinoza, Cabanis, Gobineau, and their many modern successors, especially Marxist and Darwinian) and a radical, post-moral libertinism or self-will that was growing in his age and was promoted intellectually by such post-Christian thinkers as Carlyle, Emerson, Whitman, and Nietzsche, as well as by the gross, unregenerate class and individual selfishness for which the French use the phrase "l'homme moyen sensuel." His profound insight on these issues makes him a permanent treasure of civic wisdom and self-knowledge, one of the great orthodox writers of the modern era.

As André Jardin correctly and luminously says in his biography, Tocqueville's conception of liberty "was something more sacred than Benjamin Constant's individualism and much closer to the Pauline freedom of the children of God." As Tocqueville's mentor Burke put it in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, "What is liberty without wisdom and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils." In Tocqueville's own words, "Freedom is, in truth, a *sacred* thing. There is only one thing else that better deserves the name: That is virtue. But what is virtue if not the *free* choice of what is good?" (Emphases in the original.)

If this long-time reader of Tocqueville has any quarrel with Brogan's painstakingly detailed depiction of Tocqueville's life and thought, it is with his condescending dismissal of Tocqueville's discussion of the tendency for democracy to breed pantheism in Part II of *Democracy in*

THE NATIONAL REVIEW 2007

Alaska Cruise



Put some Aurora in your Borealis! Enjoy the summer lights for 7 glorious nights on the new MS *Noordam*

Sailing July 29 to August 5 aboard Holland America's MS *Noordam* with

ARTHUR LAFFER, DICK MORRIS, VICTOR DAVIS HANSON, MICHAEL STEELE, JOHN HILLEN, EDWARD GILLESPIE, ROBERT BORK, RICHARD ALLEN, WILLIAM RUSHER, MACKUBIN OWENS, and *NR* editors JONAH GOLDBERG, RICH LOWRY, KATE O'BEIRNE, KATHRYN LOPEZ, JAY NORDLINGER, and RAMESH PONNURU

NEW SPEAKERS SIGN ON!
Dick Morris
Victor Hanson
Michael Steele
John Hillen

Here's your special opportunity to take part in one of the most exciting seafaring adventures you will ever experience: the ***National Review*** **2007 Alaska Cruise.** Featuring an incredible cast of conservative celebrity speakers—and affordable accommodations—this special trip will take place July 29 to August 5, 2007. Set for the absolutely ideal time to visit Alaska and enjoy its unique, breathtaking beauty, the phenomenal journey will sail round-trip from Seattle aboard Holland America Line's new MS *Noordam*, visiting Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka, Glacier Bay, and Victoria.

This is a *unique* opportunity to meet America's preeminent conservative celebrities: Original "definites" for our voyage were supply-side economist supreme **Arthur Laffer**, former Republican National Committee chairman **Ed Gillespie**, former Reagan National Security Advisor **Richard Allen**, legal scholar **Robert Bork**, former *NR* publisher **William Rusher**, National Review Online contributor and renowned military expert **Mackubin Owens**, NRO editors **Kathryn Jean Lopez** and **Jonah Goldberg**, plus *NR* editors **Rich Lowry**, **Kate O'Beirne**, **Jay Nordlinger**, and **Ramesh Ponnuru**.

Now we're happy to announce that this fantastic line-up will be even *more* impressive thanks to four new *phenomenal* speakers who have just RSVPed: ace political analyst and "Hillary" expert **Dick Morris**, former Maryland Lieutenant Governor **Michael Steele** (the GOP senate hopeful who almost pulled off the upset of the 2006 elections!), esteemed historian and NRO contributor **Victor Davis Hanson**, and military expert and former top State Department official **John Hillen**.

Over 300 *NR* readers—make certain you're one of them!—are expected to take this wonderful trip, which is why we most strongly urge you to act *now* to reserve your stateroom. Alaska cruises are *mega*-popular (so much so that, other than *NR*'s temporary allotment of cabins, the rest of the *Noordam* is sold out eight months in advance of sailing!) because of the region's raw beauty. For Mother Nature at her finest, you cannot beat the stunning waterways hugging the 49th State or the famous "Inside Passage." And as an unrivaled family vacation destination, how can you compete with an Alaska voyage, coming smack dab in the middle of the summer? You can't. So don't beat them, join them (with your family)!—on the ***National Review*** **2007 Alaska Cruise.**

There's a cabin to meet everyone's taste and budget: Our prices start at just $2,299 per person, and "Single" staterooms begin at a very affordable $3,399.

For those of you who've *wanted* to go on an *NR* cruise, but *haven't* yet, consider this: the "typical" *NR* cruise "alumnus" has been on an average of *four* of our seafaring trips! They keep coming back again and again for an obvious reason: an *NR* cruise is sure to be a *great* time. It's time you discovered this for yourself.

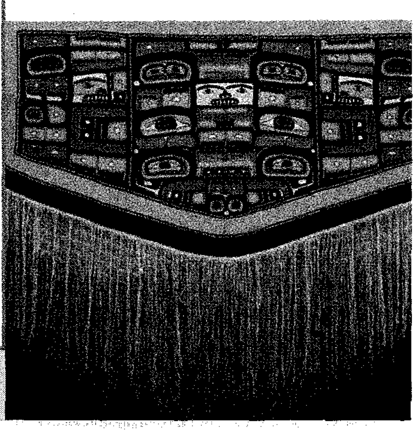
An *NR* cruise is your unique chance to meet and intimately discuss politics and policy with some of the true giants of conservative and political affairs. Our exciting seminars—we've scheduled six panel sessions (they're two hours each)—provide a scintillating take on current events. And then there are those exclusive "extras," such as our *three* cocktail receptions (convivial affairs featuring great food and libations), *two* late-night poolside "smokers" (with world-class **H. Upmann** cigars *and* complimentary cognac!), plus intimate dining with speakers and editors.

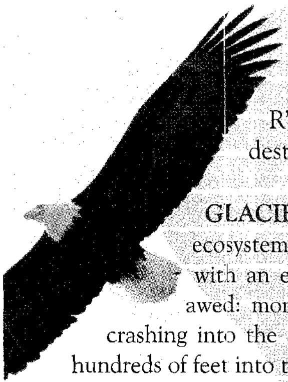
Then there's the ship: you'll find the *Noordam*'s accommodations (elegant staterooms and glamorous public spaces) to be truly luxurious, and matched by the indulgent, courteous staff, superior cuisine, and top-notch entertainment and excursions.

You'll want to join us for the exciting political discussions, the

ONE *COOOOL* WEEK OF SUMMER FUN AND CONSERVATIVE REVELRY!

DAY/DATE	PORT	ARRIVE	DEPART	SPECIAL EVENT
Sun./July 29	Seattle		4:00PM	evening cocktail reception
Mon./July 30	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars
Tues./July 31	Glacier Bay	10:00AM	4:00PM	morning seminar late-night poolside smoker
Wed./Aug. 1	Juneau, AK	7:00AM	8:00PM	evening cocktail reception
Thur./Aug. 2	Sitka, AK	8:00AM	5:00PM	late-night poolside smoker
Fri./Aug. 3	Ketchikan, AK	7:00AM	1:00PM	afternoon seminars evening cocktail reception
Sat./Aug. 4	Victoria, B.C.	6:00PM	Midnight	morning seminar afternoon seminar
Sun./Aug. 5	Seattle	7:00AM		





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GLACIER BAY National Park protects a unique ecosystem of plants and animals living in concert with an ever-changing glacial landscape. You'll be awed: monumental chunks of ice split off glaciers, crashing into the sea, roaring like thunder, water shooting hundreds of feet into the air. Glacier Bay has more actively calving tidewater glaciers than anyplace else in the world.

JUNEAU is the place to let your imagination run wild. Explore the lush Tongass National Forest. Visit the rustic shops in town. Or get out and kayak, dogsled, raft, whale watch, flightsee or fish. There's no end to the adventure because we're in port long enough to truly take advantage of the long daylight hours.

SITKA The onion domes of St. Michael's Cathedral are your first clue that Sitka was once a Russian settlement. Today, be greeted by Tlingit native people and astonishing marine life.

KETCHIKAN clings to the shores of Tongass Narrows and drapes the mountains with a cheerful air. The main attractions include Creek Street, the Tongass Historical Museum, and Totem Bight State Park (and a floatplane flightseeing trip to Misty Fjords National Monument is a transforming adventure not to be missed).

VICTORIA, B.C. A touch of England awaits in this beautiful port: afternoon tea, double-decker buses, and the famed Butchart Gardens (a brilliant tapestry of color spread across 50 blooming acres).

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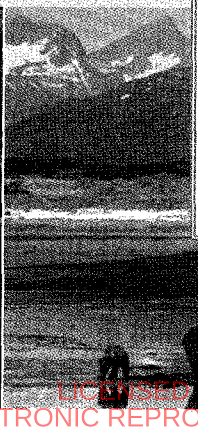

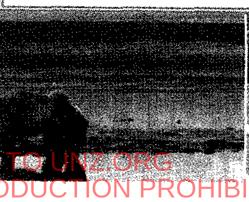

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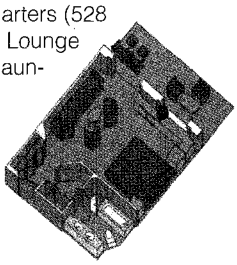
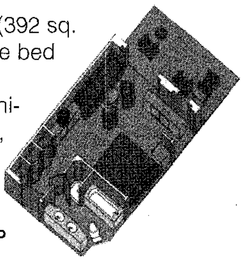
DELUXE SUITE Magnificent luxury quarters (528 sq. ft.) features use of exclusive Neptune Lounge and personal concierge, complimentary laundry, pressing and dry-cleaning service. Large private verandah, king-size bed (convertible to 2 twins), whirlpool bath/shower, dressing room, large sitting area, DVD, mini-bar, and refrigerator.



Category SA

DOUBLE OCCUPANCY RATE:	$ 5,479 P/P
SINGLE OCCUPANCY RATE:	$ 9,799

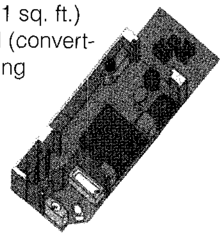
SUPERIOR SUITE Grand stateroom (392 sq. ft.) features private verandah, queen-size bed (convertible to 2 twin beds), whirlpool bath/shower, large sitting area, DVD, mini-bar, refrigerator, floor-to-ceiling windows, and much more.



Category SS

DOUBLE OCCUPANCY RATE:	$ 4,299 P/P
SINGLE OCCUPANCY RATE:	$ 7,499

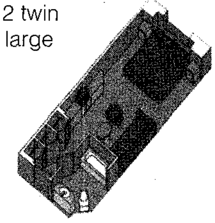
DELUXE OUTSIDE Spacious cabin (241 sq. ft.) features private verandah, queen-size bed (convertible to 2 twin beds), bath with shower, sitting area, mini-bar, tv, refrigerator, and floor-to-ceiling windows.



Categories VA / VB / VC

DOUBLE OCCUPANCY RATE:	$ 3,699 P/P
SINGLE OCCUPANCY RATE:	$ 5,999

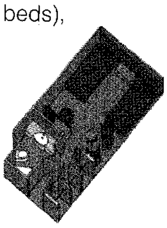
LARGE OCEAN VIEW Comfortable quarters (190 sq. ft.) features queen-size bed (convertible to 2 twin beds), bathtub with shower, sitting area, tv, large ocean-view windows.



Category D

DOUBLE OCCUPANCY RATE:	$ 2,999 P/P
SINGLE OCCUPANCY RATE:	$ 4,199

LARGE INSIDE Cozy but ample cabin quarters (185 sq. ft.) features queen-size bed (convertible to 2 twin beds), bathtub with shower, sitting area, tv.



Category K

DOUBLE OCCUPANCY RATE:	$ 2,299 P/P
SINGLE OCCUPANCY RATE:	$ 3,399

National Review 2007 Alaska Cruise Application

Mail to: National Review Cruise, The Cruise Authority, 1307 Powers Ferry Rd., Marietta, GA 30067-5409 or Fax to 770-916-1425

Please fill out application completely and mail with deposit check or fax with credit-card information. One application per cabin. If you want more than one cabin, make copies of this application. For questions call The Cruise Authority at 800-707-1634.

Personal

Name #1 (full legal name) + Nickname ☐ Date of Birth ☐ Size: S-XXL

Name #2 (full legal name) + Nickname ☐ Date of Birth ☐ Size: S-XXL

Names #3 & #4 (if taking others in your cabin) ☐ Date of Birth ☐ Size: S-XXL

Street Mailing Address

City State ZIP

(   )

Daytime Phone Email Address

Special Information (medical conditions, celebrating anniversary, etc.)

Payment

A deposit of $500 **per person** is due with this application. If paid by credit card, the balance will be charged to the *same* card on 4/27/07 unless otherwise directed. If application is received after 4/27/07, the full amount of the cruise will be charged. Cabins and categories are available on a first come, first served basis. *Suites are limited!*

☐ My deposit of $500 **per person** is included.
(Make checks payable to "National Review Cruise")

☐ Charge to: AmEx ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Expiration Date (Month) ☐☐ (Year) ☐☐

Authorized Signature of Cardholder/Guest

Information and price quote on Cancellation Fee Waiver/Medical Insurance will accompany your statement. Cancellation Penalty Schedule follows (cancellations must be received in writing by the date indicated):

PRIOR *to February 27, 2007 cancellation penalty is $100 per person*
Febraury 27 to April 27, 2007cancellation penalty is $400 per person
AFTER *April 27, 2007cancellation penalty is 100% of cruise/package*

Cruise

(All rates are per person, double occupancy, and include all port charges and taxes, all gratuities, meals, entertainment, and *National Review* activities. Cruise-only rates include all of above except airfare and transfers. Failure to appear for embarkation for any reason constitutes a cancellation subject to full penalties. Personal items not included.)

PLEASE CHECK ALL APPLICABLE BOXES!

I. CABIN CATEGORY *(see list and prices on previous page)*

First cabin category choice:________ Second cabin category choice:_______

Bedding: Beds made up as ☐ Twin ☐ King/Queen

BOOKING SINGLE? ☐ Please try to match me with a roommate. (My age: ____)

II. AIR/TRANSFER PACKAGES

☐ We will provide our own roundtrip air and transfers to and from Seattle.

☐ Include air with our package from ____________________ (see list below).

☐ We need to purchase transfers from the airport to the ship at $42 per person.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION

CITIZENSHIP: Is everyone a U.S. citizen? ☐ Yes ☐ No

DINING w/ FRIENDS/FAMILY: I wish to dine with ______________________________

☐ Every Night ☐ 3-4 times ☐ 2 times ☐ Once

IV. PRE- AND POST-CRUISE TOUR PACKAGES

☐ Please send me information on pre-/post-cruise packages in Seattle.

Important!

PASSPORT REQUIRED! Everyone cruising, including children, will be required to bring a valid passport. Current passports must be valid through February 6, 2008. Failure to do so will result in being denied boarding of the *Noordam.*

Responsibility: *Notice is hereby given that the cruise advertised herein, including all tickets, vouchers and* coupons issued and all arrangements for transportation or conveyance or for hotel or lodging or for sightseeing services are made by H20 Ltd. d/b/a The Cruise Authority (TCA) on behalf of *National Review*, as agency for Holland America Line (HAL), and/or service providers and/or suppliers providing services necessary for operation of the tour upon the express condition that TCA shall not be liable for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity to any tour participant or his or her property that may result from any act or omission of any company, contractor or employee thereof providing services in connection with the tour, including but not limited to transportation, lodging, food and beverage, entertainment, sightseeing, luggage handling and tour guiding. Furthermore, TCA cannot be held responsible for delays or costs incurred resulting from weather and road connections, breakdowns, strikes, riots, acts of God, acts of terrorism, authority of law or other circumstances beyond its control. In the event that a participant be entitled to a refund of monies paid, TCA will not be liable in excess of amount paid. TCA reserves the right to decline any persons as a tour participant at any time. TCA is not responsible for price increases imposed by HAL and/or service providers. Such increases may be implemented prior to deposit received. TCA is not responsible for breach of contract or any intentional or careless actions or omissions on the part of HAL and/or service providers, such as suppliers of tours or other services used or obtained on or at the time of the cruise or shore excursions, which result in any loss, damage, delay or injury to you or your travel companions or group members. TCA does not guarantee any of such suppliers rates, booking or reservations and TCA shall not be responsible for any social or labor unrest, mechanical or construction difficulties, acts of terrorism, diseases, local laws, climate conditions, abnormal conditions, or developments or any other actions, omissions or conditions outside of TCA's control. TCA, nor *National Review* shall be responsible for the accessibility, appearance, actions or decisions of those individuals promoted for this cruise. By embarking upon his or her travel, the traveler voluntarily assumes all risks, and is advised to obtain appropriate insurance coverage against them. Retention of tickets, reservations, or pack*age after issuance shall constitute a consent to the above and an agreement on your part to convey the con*tents hereof to your travel companions.

AIR TRAVEL: You can simplify your air-travel arrangements by taking advantage of **Holland America's "Fly Cruise" Program.** The following per-person, economy-class prices for travel to and from the listed home city air gateways include transfers to and from the *Noordam* in Seattle, WA. First-Class air is available upon request. You cannot utilize frequent flyer points to upgrade these airfares to First Class.

AL	Birmingham	$746
	Huntsville	$736
	Mobile	$736
AK	Anchorage	$686
AR	Little Rock	$686
AZ	Phoenix	$456
	Tucson	$496
CA	Burbank	$426
	Fresno	$546
	Los Angeles	$416
	Oakland	$436
	Ontario	$426
	Orange County	$426
	Sacramento	$496
	San Diego	$446
	San Francisco	$406
	San Jose	$436
	Santa Barbara	$506
CO	Col. Springs	$606
	Denver	$556
CT	Hartford	$686
DC	Washington	$686
FL	Ft. Lauderdale	$656
	Ft. Myers	$716
	Jacksonville	$666
FL	Miami	$656
	Orlando	$656
	Pensacola	$656
	Tallahassee	$776
	Tampa	$676
	West Palm Beach	$756
GA	Atlanta	$656
	Savannah	$776
HI	Honolulu	$766
ID	Boise	$476
IL	Chicago	$676
	Moline	$686
	Peoria	$686
IN	Ft. Wayne	$686
	Indianapolis	$656
IA	Cedar Rapids	$676
	Des Moines	$686
KS	Wichita	$646
KY	Lexington	$686
	Louisville	$706
LA	Baton Rouge	$666
	New Orleans	$636
	Shreveport	$706
ME	Portland	$726
MD	Baltimore	$666
MA	Boston	$666
MI	Detroit	$696
	Grand Rapids	$696
	Saginaw	$706
	Traverse City	$716
MN	Mnpls/St. Paul	$676
	Rochester	$736
MS	Jackson	$666
MO	Kansas City	$706
	Springfield	$676
	St. Louis	$686
MT	Billings	$506
	Bozeman	$486
	Great Falls	$536
	Helena	$486
	Missoula	$486
NE	Lincoln	$726
	Omaha	$636
NV	Las Vegas	$476
	Reno	$536
NJ	Newark	$656
NM	Albuquerque	$606
NY	Albany	$686
	Buffalo	$656
	New York	$676
NY	Rochester	$696
	Syracuse	$696
NC	Charlotte	$696
	Greensboro	$716
	Raleigh/Durham	$726
ND	Bismark	$736
	Fargo	$736
OK	Oklahoma City	$676
	Tulsa	$666
OH	Akron/Canton	$676
	Cincinnati	$656
	Cleveland	$656
	Columbus	$676
	Dayton	$696
OR	Portland	$366
PA	Allentown	$726
	Harrisburg	$716
	Philadelphia	$676
	Pittsburgh	$676
	Wilkes-Barre	$746
PR	San Juan	$956
RI	Providence	$706
SC	Charleston	$676
	Columbia	$696
	Greenville	$696
SD	Rapid City	$586
	Sioux Falls	$836
TX	Amarillo	$766
	Austin	$566
	Corpus Christi	$676
	Dallas/Ft. Worth	$586
	El Paso	$606
	Houston	$546
	Lubbock	$756
	Midland/Odessa	$756
	San Antonio	$576
TN	Chattanooga	$706
	Knoxville	$706
	Memphis	$706
	Nashville	$676
UT	Salt Lake City	$476
VT	Burlington	$676
VA	Norfolk	$686
	Richmond	$716
WA	Seattle	$384
	Spokane	$396
WI	Green Bay	$766
	Madison	$686
	Milwaukee	$676

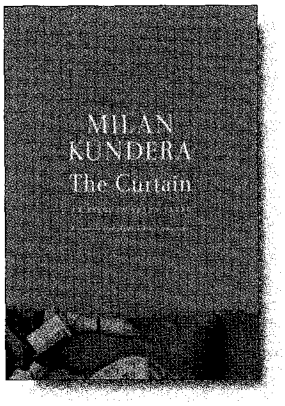
IMPORTANT NOTES: **1.** These air add-ons apply to the cruise or cruise + pre- or post-cruise package. All transfers for air/sea passengers are included. **2.** Should you elect to provide your own air transportation, note that transfers from the airport to the *Noordam* (Port of Seattle) are not included, but are available for purchase $42pp roundtrip. Schedule your arrival in San Diego (SEA) leaving plenty of time for flight delays! Arrive no later than 12:00noon on July 29th. Do not arrange return flights from Seattle before 12:00noon on August 5th. **3.** Should you wish to deviate your air from the "standard" schedule, Holland America Line charges $50pp (non-refundable) for this service. All requests must be sent in writing to The Cruise Authority. **4.** Special seat assignments or other requests must be made directly with the participating air carrier. You will receive your air schedule approximately 30 days prior to departure. **5.** Fees will apply to any changes to existing air reservations made within 65 days of travel or deletion/cancellation of the Fly-Cruise Plan from your booking within this same time period.

America: "What Makes the Mind of Democratic Peoples Lean Toward Pantheism." Scholars of Romanticism and popular culture from Irving Babbitt to Jacques Barzun, Quentin Anderson, E. D. Hirsch, Daniel Bell, and Allan Bloom have remarked upon the promiscuous, pantheistic spirituality whose forefathers were Rousseau and Whitman and whose progeny is our ubiquitous "rock culture." Very much in Tocqueville's manner, Anderson saw Whitman's demotic cultural campaign as "a rejection of Christianity on behalf of an emotional egalitarianism" that was rooted in Whitman's "rejection of the idea that the self is internally structured by conscience." In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Bloom discerned the key pantheistic-spiritual role that rock music pervasively plays in the sensibility of our young. Bell sees an anarchic aesthetic paganism undermining the otherwise successful operation of the American polity and economy. Barzun has noted the increasing vulgarity of our culture, and quoted Tocqueville's comments on the dark side of egalitarianism: "Low emotions and ignoble instincts . . . are the products of equality." Writing in 1986, Barzun argued that "leveling down" may take us far below "comfortable mediocrity" and reduce our "social surface to the plane of the deliberately sordid."

That Burke and Tocqueville were profoundly concerned with manners and mores is a sign of their wisdom, and Tocqueville's worries about egalitarianism, democratic culture, and pantheism are far from misplaced or irrelevant to our condition and that of our current cultural effluvia. The pantheistic, democratic sensibility from Rousseau and Whitman to Allen Ginsberg, John Lennon, Mick Jagger, and Madonna is a lethal toxin, a form of cultural bacteria that may rot from within a prosperous civilization that has defeated its most dangerous external foes.

Plato expressed such suspicions long ago. Tocqueville had over 2,000 more years of historical experience on which to draw to make his case against the pantheistic perversions of democracy and equality, and in favor of their noble and positive features. As Hugh Brogan's fine biography shows, Tocqueville was a rare thing: an aristocrat who was really noble, in thought, word, and deed, and whose liberality was never libertine. **NR**

The Stories We Tell



The Curtain:
An Essay in Seven Parts,
by Milan Kundera (HarperCollins,
176 pp., $22.95)

ELIZABETH POWERS

The chief concern of this, Milan Kundera's third volume of essays, is the modern novel. His own novels of course might be called a giant essay on the political and cultural life of the modern era; the best known, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), opens with a discussion of Nietzsche's myth of eternal return, and the entire sixth book of that novel is an essay on kitsch. He takes seriously what Georg Lukács, the Hungarian Marxist literary critic, had to say in *Theory of the Novel*: "The need for reflexion is the deepest melancholy of every great and genuine novel."

Kundera would perhaps deny an affiliation with Lukács, but his writing about the novel differs from that of such English practitioners as E. M. Forster and, lately, David Lodge, both of whom seem indifferent to literary theory or history and instead focus on the craft of writing. Kundera is uninterested in literary nuts and bolts (point of view, unreliable narrator), conventions that, in his estimation, do the author's work for him. His subject is the way in which the novel records the transmission of values, both its own and those of Western secular culture: Not only do Tolstoy's interior monologues preface those of Joyce 50 years down the road, but Alonzo Quijada, who set out 400 years ago to become a knight-errant, has returned as the land-surveyor K.

Modernity—which Kundera dates from *Don Quixote*, not Descartes—has a twin sister: forgetting. Memory's failure has been a major theme of Kundera's literary works. The novel since Rabelais and Cervantes (for Kundera, the two progenitors of the genre) constitutes a kind of archive of the hitherto unrevealed possibilities of human existence during that centuries-long march. *The Curtain* makes a tour, in no particular order, in seven mini-essays, of those writers who have revealed these possibilities and, in the process, held up a mirror to modern European man and woman.

Why a mirror? Again, let me return to the Marxist literary critic: "The novel is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God." The notion of man's transcendental homelessness is common post-Enlightenment intellectual property, and Kundera, above all things an Enlightenment secularist, has clothed this abstraction in novelistic flesh throughout his career. Whether in the novels of life in his Soviet-dominated Czech homeland (e.g., *The Farewell Party*, *Life Is Elsewhere*) or, since his emigration to France in 1975, in those set in the consumer-manipulated West (*Immortality*, *Identity*), Kundera's characters live in internal exile from their prosaic environment. It is not an environment of their own choosing, but a world into which they are born and which is "already made-up, masked, *reinterpreted*." It is not the task of the novelist to sugarcoat this situation (that would result in kitsch), but, instead, to "tear through the curtain of pre-interpretation."

As Kundera has made clearer elsewhere (e.g., his acceptance speech in 1985 for the Jerusalem Prize), this lack of illusion is less a depressing prospect than a liberating one since, in losing the certainty of truth, man becomes an individual, free of the tyranny of those who impose totalizing visions (the commissars, the image-makers). Such, at least, is Kundera's vision, or perhaps the distillation of the wisdom of his own literary forefathers. He admits, after all, in one of the essays in this

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Elizabeth Powers is currently completing a memoir of American life since the 1950s.

small volume ("Getting into the Soul of Things") that a novelist writing about the art of the novel is really talking about the writers who have "a secret presence in his own work." The writers to whom Kundera returns over and over include Laurence Sterne (who highlighted the "problematic nature of action" in the modern world), Gustave Flaubert (who brought to our attention "the running water of everyday life" but, above all, stupidity, which marches right along with the march of progress), Robert Musil (who "brought thinking into the novel"), Franz Kafka (who breached the borders of the plausible), and Hermann Broch (who integrated different historical eras into a single composition). As Kundera acknowledges: "No great novelist can exit from the history of the novel."

Much of *The Curtain* has been rehearsed in earlier essays, and the essentials of Kundera's intellectual orientation can be found in "Die Weltliteratur," the second essay in this volume. World literature is not, as the phrase might suggest, works that have traveled beyond their national boundaries and their own time and, like some UNESCO-protected monument, become the common property of mankind, say, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* or *The Tale of Genji.* The term is associated with Goethe, who, in one of his orphic utterances, linked world literature with the exchange of goods: It is a commerce among peoples and nations, the exchange of ideas and cultural treasures. Goethe believed that such exchange would lead to tolerance among nations, a worthy Enlightenment aim; his use of commercial metaphors anticipates what has been the case, in the West at least. The Enlightenment and its values have been transmitted supranationally and in parallel with free trade. The novel, indeed the entire industry of publishing and publication, has been part of this process.

It is in this section that Kundera writes most eloquently about his homeland, especially its historical fate and its link with the entity he calls Central Europe, which is composed of nations that "have never been masters of either their own destinies or their borders. They have rarely been the subjects of history, almost always its objects. Their unity was *unintentional.*" In a typically vivid condensation of a complex historical event, Kundera writes of the Munich agreement, which truncated Czechoslovakia from Europe: "In a room apart the two Czech diplomats waited all night to be led, the next morning, down long hallways into a room where Chamberlain and Daladier, weary, blasé, yawning, informed them of their death sentence. . . . In Europe . . . there are the nations seated in the negotiating chambers and those who wait all night in the antechambers." This agreement, and later Yalta, consigned these small nations to "the Slavic East," and for Kundera there is nothing more admirable in the Europe of the 20th century than "that golden chain of revolts that, over forty years, eroded the empire of the East, made it ungovernable, and tolled the death knell of its reign." In rescuing Central Europe from the historical forgetting imposed by Soviet occupation, he calls our attention to its contribution to "Weltliteratur," in the form of the modern realist novel.

When Kundera writes that the nations of Europe, large and small, have a "common destiny" and that the "European novel" records the development of this destiny, he means this supranational Enlightenment ethos of secularism, rationality, and tolerance. Increasingly, the European novel, as he defines it, has extended its sway to Latin America and to countries like India: Alejo Carpentier, Ernesto Sábato, Salman Rushdie, Gabriel García Márquez. In their novelistic journeys through centuries and continents, in their elaborate use of fantasy, these writers reveal themselves to be inheritors and transmitters of the novel's history and of Europe's intellectual and cultural inheritance.

Maybe, maybe not. Interestingly, no contemporary American authors are included here, and it is only Faulkner and Hemingway, perennial European favorites, who appear in Kundera's historical survey. But isn't America the nation that has made the greatest contribution to the free circulation of goods and ideas? Yet very few Americans (outside the universities) would agree with the following statement by Kundera: "Against our real world, which, by its very nature, is fleeting and worthy of forgetting, works of art stand as a different world, a world that is ideal, solid, where every detail has its importance." As much a fan as I am of Kundera, this aestheticizing of life strikes me as the response of nations that, for the past half century, have been consigned to the antechambers of history. Perhaps the difference between Europe and America is that the one is satisfied with imagining the possibilities of human existence, while the other attempts to realize these in the real world. Whose lead will Latin America and the rest of the nations follow? **NR**

LAST NIGHT

When the sun sets, and he isn't home, she walks
Not to be waiting, but she leaves a note:
Back soon, her only message, only wish.

After all, she didn't think he'd stay;
No plans, so no surprises when it ends.
The dishes wait unwashed. Bitter stains

Stretch like shadows on the tablecloth.
Once you believe in finding gods in men
You understand their restlessness as faith;

The way she feels his truth against her skin,
The rough edge of a matchbook, while she grieves
To see her saviors lost, and lost again.

God save the church that she takes refuge in,
The sanctuary given fools and thieves,
This silent girl who loves a man who leaves.

—CHRYSS YOST

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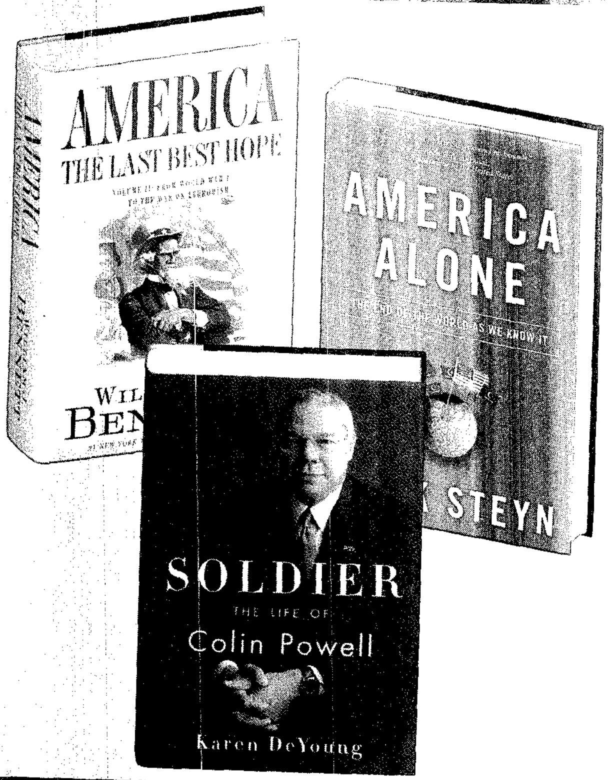
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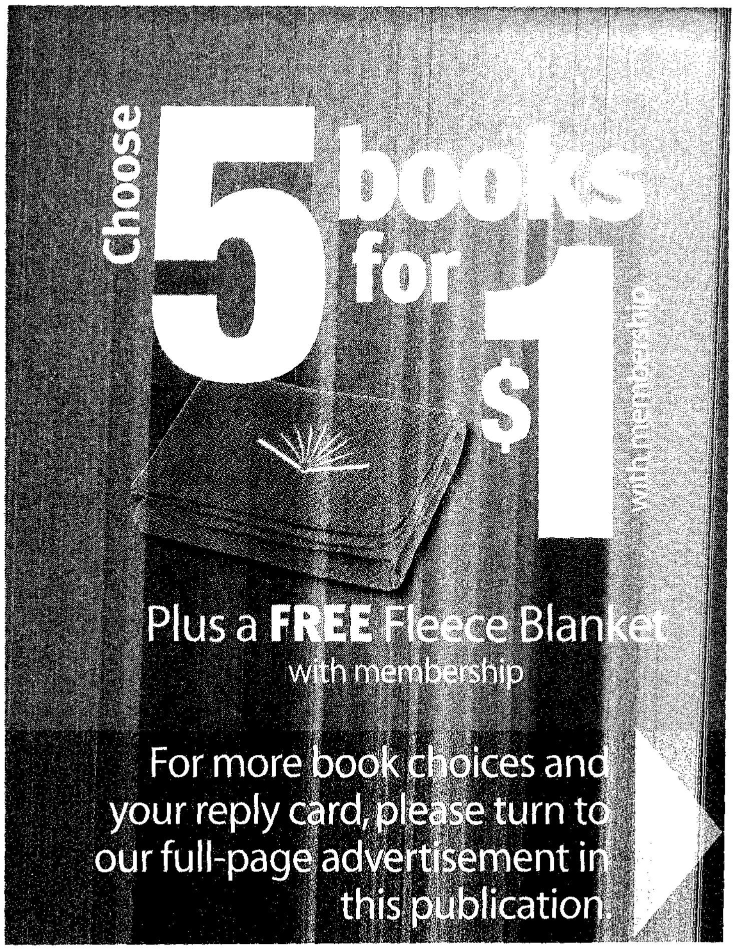
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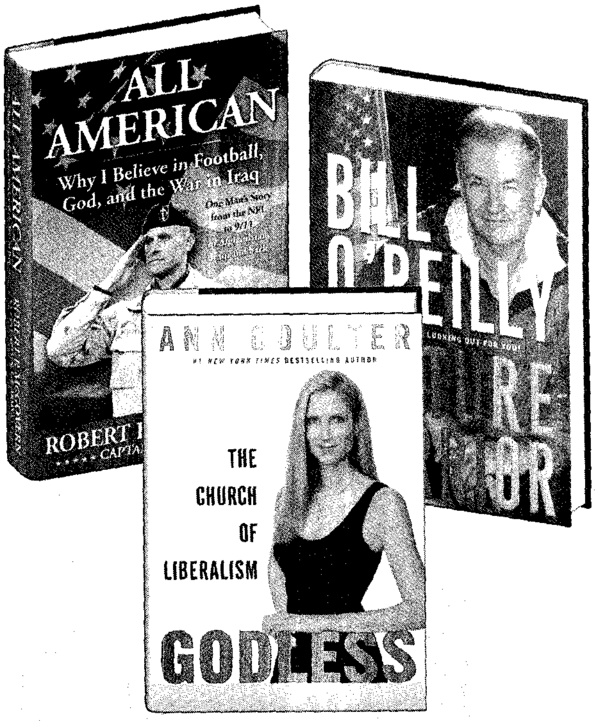
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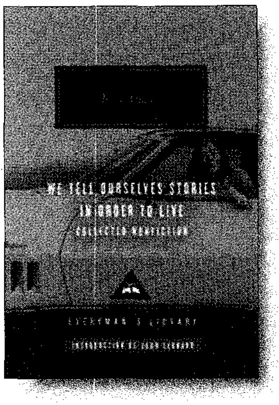
The Conservative Alternative

Breakdown Lane



We Tell Ourselves Stories in Order to Live: Collected Nonfiction,
by Joan Didion (Knopf, 1,160 pp., $30)

KELLY JANE TORRANCE

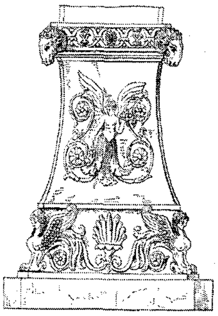
THE 1960s gave Joan Didion a nervous breakdown—or so it often seems, judging from her work on those years. "I went to San Francisco," she writes in the preface to her 1968 essay collection *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, "because I had not been able to work in some months, had been paralyzed by the conviction that writing was an irrelevant act, that the world as I had understood it no longer existed." Lines from the Yeats poem from which she took her book's title—and that of her essay about a 1967 trip to the Summer of Love—"reverberated in my inner ear as if they were surgically implanted there." (One of its most famous: "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.") While writing about the events of 1967, she was seized by an unnamed illness. "I drank gin-and-hot-water to blunt the pain and took Dexedrine to blunt the gin and wrote the piece."

Other writers have explored those riotous times. But none were as personally troubled by them as Joan Didion. Her confessional style helped herald the New Journalism and opened the doors—for good and ill—for women to write openly about their experiences. If all the doyenne of American journalism explored were her own psyche, however, we shouldn't care so much about her work, which is now part of the Everyman's Library. *We Tell Ourselves Stories in Order to Live* contains seven books of journalism—all of her non-fiction except her 2005 memoir of new widowhood, *The Year of Magical Thinking.*

Didion's writing was from the beginning startlingly individual. She called herself "neurotically inarticulate." She told us she turned down acid in Haight-Ashbury, pleading that she was "unstable." But it's clear that what unsettled her most was the increasing breakdown of society. Crime is a frequent obsession of hers, the evidence that too many people are not keeping up their part of the social contract. With Didion, the personal always turns out to be the political.

In the essay "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," Didion explores with a novelist's eye for detail (she's written five works of fiction) the lives and homes of the denizens of Haight-Ashbury. It is a series of little vignettes, and one may wonder—as one often does of Didion's work—whether they make a whole. But Didion's light touch eventually gives way to more serious analysis.

"These were children who grew up cut loose from the web of cousins and great-aunts and family doctors and lifelong neighbors who had traditionally suggested and enforced the society's values," she writes of the stoned teenagers. "They are less in rebellion against the society than ignorant of it."



Didion read the results of the Sixties before they had even ended. But then, she had always been a bit cynical: "As it happens I am still committed to the idea that the ability to think for one's self depends upon one's mastery of the language, and I am not optimistic about children who will settle for saying, to indicate that their mother and father do not live together, that they come from 'a broken home.'"

"Slouching," like much of her work of the time originally published in *The Saturday Evening Post*, is one of Didion's most perceptive essays. She's still working—the bestselling *Year of Magical Thinking* was a National Book Award winner and will soon be a Broadway show starring Vanessa Redgrave—but her really important journalism examined the changing America of the 1960s and 1970s. One might fairly ask, on the publication of this 1,100-plus-page volume: Is Joan Didion still relevant?

One might as well ask whether F. Scott Fitzgerald or Henry James should still be read. Didion's gifts don't approach the genius of those two men, but she's one of the best living chroniclers of the American psyche—not just her own. Take the essay "7000 Romaine, Los Angeles 38." Didion might seem to be wasting her considerable talents writing about an already oft-explored figure like Howard Hughes. But her sharply discerning essay, with shades of James, not only hints at what the Master might have made of Hughes. It explains the American mind, even today:

> That we have made a hero of Howard Hughes tells us something interesting about ourselves, something only dimly remembered, tells us that the secret point of money and power in America is neither the things that money can buy nor power for power's sake (Americans are uneasy with their possessions, guilty about power, all of which is difficult for Europeans to perceive because they are themselves so truly materialistic, so versed in the uses of power), but absolute personal freedom, mobility, privacy. It is the instinct which drove America to the Pacific, all through the nineteenth century, the desire to be able to find a restaurant open in case you want a sandwich, to be a free agent, live by one's own rules.

In the age of blogs, cellphone cameras, and reality TV, Didion's last sentence is hauntingly prescient: "He is the last private man, the dream we no longer admit."

It might seem funny to point to a 1967 essay as evidence of Didion's relevance. Even now, she's sometimes as good as she was back then at deftly detailing a particular story. (She might be describing her own method when she writes in "Times Mirror Square," an essay about the *Los Angeles Times* published in her 1992 book *After Henry*: "This kind of

Kelly Jane Torrance is an arts and entertainment writer at the *Washington Times* and fiction editor of *Doublethink*.

detail was sometimes dismissed by reporters at other papers as 'L.A. color,' but really it was something different: The details gave the tone of the situation, the subtext without which the text could not be understood.") But she isn't always willing to tell us what she thinks the particulars mean; she sometimes provides the subtext without the text. Other times she reads too much into the particulars, generalizing where it isn't warranted. And when she turned to politics as she got older, she seemed to lose some of the personal passion that made her best work so compelling.

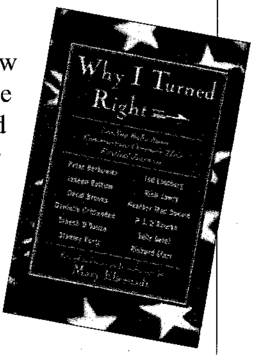
As to her basic conservatism, it should be proof enough to point out that Didion believes in original sin.

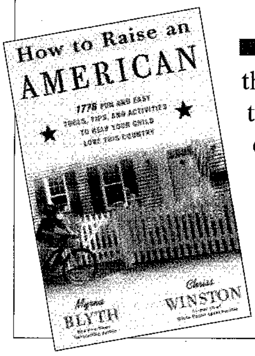
Even with these faults, Joan Didion remains one of the best regarded of conservative commentators. It's an odd statement to make of someone who now makes her home in *The New York Review of Books* poking fun at such figures as Ronald Reagan, Newt Gingrich, and Dick Cheney. But Didion did, after all, get her start in journalism at NATIONAL REVIEW. Her forefathers, she writes in the foreword to *Political Fictions*, a 2001 collection of *NYRB* pieces, "believed above all that a limited government had no business tinkering with the private or cultural life of its citizens." She voted for Barry Goldwater in 1964, but became a Democrat in disgust ("personally offended") after the California Republicans who rejected Goldwater embraced Reagan, a man she didn't see as "an authentic conservative." Now Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, "liberal Hollywood" and the religious Right are all targets of Didion's dark wit.

But as to her basic conservatism, it should be proof enough to point out that Didion believes in original sin. In "On the Morning After the Sixties," an essay from her 1979 collection *The White Album*, she writes of "the ambiguity of belonging to a generation distrustful of political highs, the historical irrelevancy of growing up convinced that the heart of darkness lay not in some error of social organization but in man's own blood." It's hard to imagine such a line in *NYRB*. But Didion has spent her long career reminding us of that lesson in vivid detail. Say what you will about her somewhat self-centered style; America needs more courageous thinkers who will write about life as it is lived—not as elites on all sides seek to manufacture it. **NR**

■ SHELF LIFE ■

To understand today's America, it's essential to know why so many reasonable and intelligent people rejected the liberal orthodoxy of the Sixties and Seventies. In ***Why I Turned Right: Leading Baby Boom Conservatives Chronicle Their Political Journeys*** (Threshold, 291 pp., $23), editor Mary Eberstadt has assembled twelve essays from writers who undertook that long march rightward. Together, they paint a convincing portrait of how mainstream liberalism lost its hold on American political culture.

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1776 fun and easy tools, tips, and activities to help your child love this country
Myrna BLYTH
Chriss WINSTON

■ If we want the next generation to be able to articulate their gratitude for the American heritage, it's going to be up to their parents to teach them about it. (The schools? Fuhgedaboudit.) There's a great deal of useful advice on this in ***How to Raise an American: 1776 Fun and Easy Tools, Tips, and Activities to Help Your Child Love This Country*** (Crown Forum, 320 pp., $22.95), by Myrna Blyth and Chriss Winston.

—MICHAEL POTEMRA

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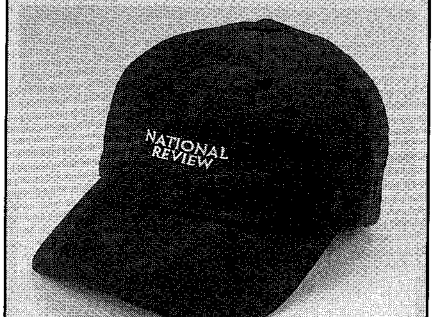

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■ FILM ■

Against Closure

ROSS DOUTHAT

LONG, repetitive, and deliberately inconclusive, David Fincher's *Zodiac* is the best movie of 2007 so far, and a better piece of filmmaking than anything nominated for Best Picture in the year just past. Superficially more conventional than his brilliant 1990s provocations, *Seven* and *Fight Club*, Fincher's latest film is actually another exercise in subversion, in which the familiar rhythms of two crowd-pleasing genres—the serial-killer film and the police procedural—are faithfully recreated and then allowed to dissipate gradually into a miasma of missed connections, lost opportunities, and ambiguity. It's a craftsman's calculated rebuke to his audience's expectations: a thriller where the action is frontloaded and the payoff never really shows up.

Fincher's ostensible subject is the Zodiac killer's reign of terror in the late-Sixties Bay Area, which either lasted ten months or well into the Seventies, depending on whether you believe that all the unsolved murders the psychopath claimed credit for were actually his doing. But *Zodiac* is mainly concerned with what happened after the killing stopped and the trail went cold: The only on-screen murders take place near the beginning of the movie, and in the two hours of painstaking investigation that follow there are none of the damsel-in-distress, race-against-the-clock contrivances that even highbrow thrillers employ to jolt the audience awake. Nor, apart from one unnerving interview, does the killer's personality or psychology ever take center stage: The detectives don't use astrological tables to predict where he'll strike next, or parse the cryptograms he mailed to the *San Francisco Chronicle* for hints of some childhood trauma or buried psychosexual compulsion. The Zodiac's motives and personality, like his identity, remain persistently hidden—the unknowable unknown at the heart of the plot, the dark matter that holds the movie's universe together.

Three men, in particular, are pulled into the case, like metal filings swallowed by a magnetic field—Robert Downey Jr. as Paul Avery, the hard-living *Chronicle* reporter who covered the murders; Mark Ruffalo as David Toschi, the San Francisco detective assigned to the case; and Jake Gyllenhaal as Robert Graysmith, the *Chronicle* cartoonist who became obsessed with the unsolved mystery and launched his own, layman's investigation even as the cops were giving up. From their three overlapping stories, the film opens outward, revealing a sprawling canvas of the lives the killer touched—Ruffalo's partner and his superiors, the cops in the suburban towns where the killer also struck, Avery's editors, Graysmith's wife and children, and then a host of others, witnesses and victims and sources and suspects. Fincher has assembled an astonishing collection of character actors to bring his tapestry to life—Chloë Sevigny and Brian Cox, Anthony Edwards and Elias Koteas, Dermot Mulroney and Philip Baker Hall—and there's purpose in every casting decision. By using a James LeGros or an Adam Goldberg or a Clea DuVall—all actors you immediately recognize, but can't quite place—in minor roles, Fincher adds weight even to the walk-on parts, implying that his expansive film only begins to reckon with how far the ripples from the killings spread.

The first two-thirds of the movie belongs to Avery and Toschi, with Gyllenhaal's Graysmith—an eager-beaver Eagle Scout, nicknamed "Retard" by his jaded colleagues at the *Chronicle*—lurking in the background. Then *Zodiac* leaps forward in time and doubles back on itself, with an increasingly obsessive Graysmith revisiting territory we've already seen the cops cover, ostensibly to research a book on the case but really in the hope of solving it. His faith in closure makes him a vehicle for the audience's expectations—long after everyone else has given up, he's still holding out for the truth, and we're there rooting him on, hoping for our money's worth, for the moment of catharsis and resolution that every mystery story promises.

Throughout, though, it's clear that *Zodiac* has something else in mind. Graysmith isn't Clarice Starling from *Silence of the Lambs*, battling sexists and psychopaths to get her man. As Gyllenhaal plays him, he's a nice enough guy but also an obsessive-compulsive weirdo, who wrecks his marriage and risks his life for a chance to look a killer in the eyes. Avery, the journalist, is a self-destructive narcissist who makes himself the story and throws up roadblocks for the cops; Toschi is a competent detective trapped in a dysfunctional bureaucracy, where turf wars, primitive technology, and human fallibility consistently trump good police work. Nor is the killer himself invested with anything like the malignant allure of a Hannibal Lecter, or the crazed Thomist who cut a swath through Fincher's *Seven*. He is a nullity, when we have no idea whodunit; and, even once we suspect we do, he remains an irruption of evil that's defined only by what he negates—sanity, morality, and life itself.

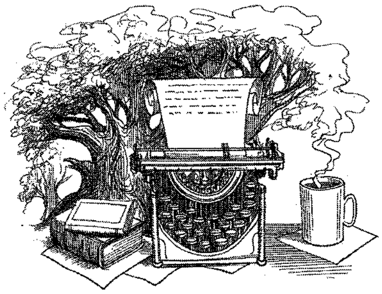
There are contrasts drawn between movieland and reality. A character notes in passing that Ruffalo's Toschi was the basis for Steve McQueen's Bullitt, and near the midpoint of the film, just as the police inquiry is running out of steam, several of the characters show up at the San Francisco premiere of *Dirty Harry* to watch Clint Eastwood's hero cop chase, and catch, the Zodiac-inspired "Scorpio." Late in Graysmith's investigation, Fincher drops him into a perfect thriller set-piece, leaving him alone with a creepy suspect in a creaking basement—and then exposes the whole thing as a red herring. The movies are just the movies, *Zodiac* insists; the Zodiac killer was real life.

In the end, of course, *Zodiac* is a movie too, and Fincher's reality-encompassing ambitions are a weakness as well as a strength. His film might have been better either shorter or longer than its present length—either as a tighter story, with fewer subplots and blind alleys, or as a still-more-epic picture, with more elbow room for characters who are shortchanged in the current cut.

But *Zodiac* is still a remarkable achievement, a rare film that manages to tell a complicated story without condescending, and a sensational story without pandering. It's a gripping entertainment shot through with existential dread, which sounds like a contradiction but turns out, in Fincher's hands, to be the best way to look at not only the hunt for the Zodiac killer, but the human condition itself. **NR**

■ COUNTRY LIFE ■

Spring Rhythm



RICHARD BROOKHISER

Spring begins with flowers. That is what Swinburne wrote. “And frosts are slain and flowers begotten, / And in green underwood and cover / Blossom by blossom the spring begins.” Pre-spring begins with sound.

The essential, coldest, and most threatening mark of winter is silence. Urban bustle masks it, but at night in the country it is revealed. No leaves stir; they have fallen. No streams gargle; they have frozen. No insects creak; they have died. If wind blows, it moves the tree branches with the crazed power of a force in interstellar space. You might hear a limb crack. A far-off dog is as alone and exposed as your thoughts.

The first sound to break the spell is dripping. By day, temperatures flirt with the freezing point, running above it, then coyly falling back. Even when the thermometer reports little movement, the sun is higher and stronger, and creates small Daytonas and Ft. Lauderdales on the roof. The snow piled there, like shingles dully left by the roofers of February, begins to sink. It shows a brave white face to its destroyer, but it is dissolving within. The gutters, which can handle any downpour, can’t handle this. When the melt refreezes at night, they fill with rods of ice. So the water escapes over the sides, through joints, wherever there is a gap or an irregularity. In the snow beneath the corners, it drills little spa pools, miniature cold tubs. It baptizes the front step. It finds the space between your hat and your collar when you are fumbling with a key, or fetching firewood. What kind of a sample would it make? It is not funky enough for hip-hop, too slow for disco. It is a snare-drum tap for a color guard, or for a stripper from the days before health clubs taught pole dancing.

Water is moving in the trees too, and you can hear it if you tap them. Syrup can be made from hickories and birches, but the best purveyors are sugar maples. Half a dozen large ones stand in a small field by my lawn. They are not giants, they will never grace a record book, but they are big enough that birds who perch in them look impertinent and comical. They have the disheveled appearance of old ones, whether trees or people. The previous owner of my house made the field by clearing out the small stuff; the sugar maples remain, as if not wanting to go to their rooms just yet. Every year this time our friend brings over his drill and we tap a couple. Sometimes you can see dark stains where the sap is simply bursting out at the seams. The sound of water dripping off the eaves is interesting; the sound of sap dripping into buckets is thrilling. This is intimacy, for sap is like blood. Yet the sugar maples have enough to spare. They are so tall and the hydraulics of sucking sap up to their topmost branches seems so daunting, you think they might just say the hell with it. But here they are, one more time, pumping away. Climate change is interfering with maple-syrup production in New York and Vermont; in a hundred years, they say, we will be like Virginia. My trees are going out with a plink.

Even when the thermometer reports little movement, the sun is higher and stronger, and creates small Daytonas and Ft. Lauderdales on the roof.

The other sound of pre-spring is the change that occurs in the calls of birds. Birds that do not go south for the winter are the most loyal and defiant friends of life. They cannot hibernate, so every day they must be out and about, finding something to eat somewhere. As they move, they make their calls, for whatever purpose they make them. Thomas Hardy heard a thrush that sounded as if it was hopeful; he must not have read *Jude the Obscure*. In pre-spring, the bird calls become louder, and more numerous. The bettors put their money down, and now their ships are coming in, yeah, wait and see. A pair of cardinals lives behind my house (they must be Eastern Rite, or post–Vatican III). They are the shyest birds, though what they gain from it I cannot imagine. He is as bright and obvious as a stop light; no amount of hanging back can conceal him, especially when their favorite bramble is leafless. Though her feathers are duller, her beak is as orange as his. Winter never vanquishes them, but only now do they make their characteristic call: *Cheer cheer cheer.* At this time of year, I also begin to hear and see phoebes. They love humans, or at least the building sites we provide. They have nested on the exhaust vent and on the motion light. When we tore off a room and rebuilt it, they slipped into the living room and nested on the hub of the ceiling fan. If you come too close, they dart away furtively (how can you escape detection if you leave a nest behind?). Their call is thought to be melancholy: They say their name, in a descending minor third. Yet for all that, and their drabness, they are distinguishable by their lively, flexing tails. Their reappearance, and their closeness, is a heartening sign.

Other signs will come: colors (green returning to the grass, gold to the goldfinches); Swinburne’s blossoms; tree frogs; leaf-mist. Then the hit parade, multiple, unstoppable. The night will fill with voices, sighs, splashes, chirps, yips, screams, while the days will fill with everything, races at the speedway, boys riding ATVs, girls flexing their hair; also with boredom and crimes. But it all begins now, with a hundred small noises. In the beginning were the sounds. Keith Mano, NR’s great writer, laid down the law on exclamation points: They may be used only in dialogue, and then only when the speaker has just been disemboweled. But this is not a law of nature. The sounds of pre-spring are a chorus, and the speakers have just come back to motion, life! **NR**

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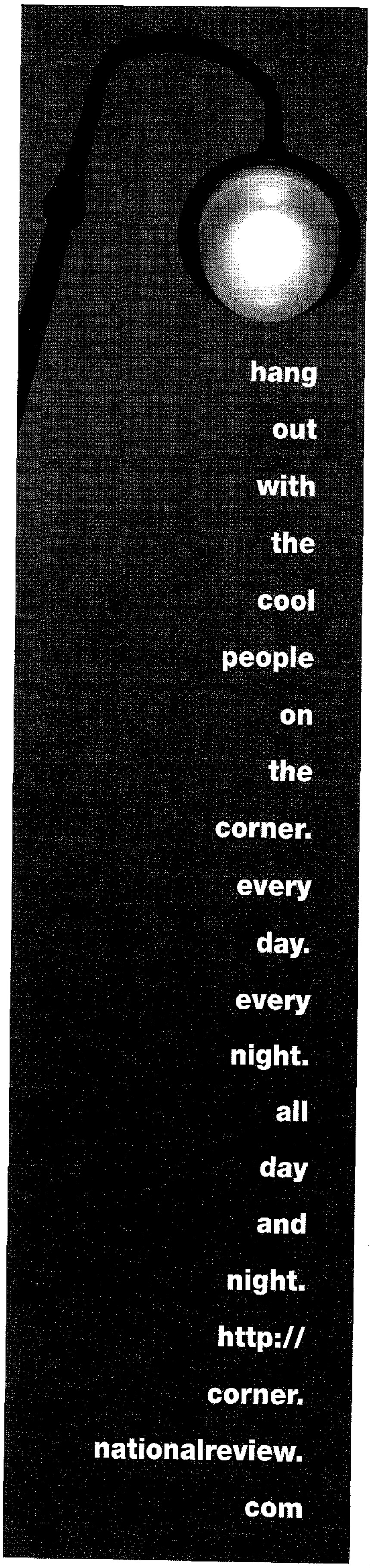


on the right

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

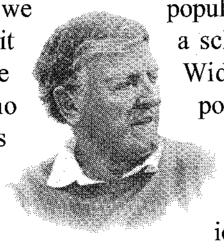
A New Bill of Rights?

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 27

NEWSPAPERS are carrying lead stories on the inchoate schism between the Episcopalians and the rest of the Anglican Communion. The news tick is that the Anglicans (headed by the archbishop of Canterbury) have informed the Episcopal Church in the United States that it has to stop allowing certain practices by next September or else disaffiliate.

That can be made to sound like a threat from one branch of the YMCA to another branch, to stop scoring field goals the way they've been doing, or play with another league.

The tendency is to depreciate arguments, even battles, in which we are not directly concerned. But it is important, also, to examine the perspectives of those who quarrel. There was a lot of this quarreling among Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists 150 years ago over the issue of slavery. And having decided to free blacks, the next thing you knew, the churches proceeded to free women. There goes the neighborhood?



Well, yes, in a way. But the installation in New Hampshire of a homosexual bishop who advocates the ordination of homosexual men and women as clergy is taken by the men in charge of the Anglican Communion as different from the kind of egalitarianism that abolished slavery and extended civil rights to women. These, we all tend to agree, were simply belated acknowledgments of basic Christian penetrations into the nature of the community of God. Yet the theologians who hold the line on the matter of homosexuality may feel a social battering on the order of what Southern theologians in the 19th century were subjected to when they defended slavery.

The capacity of this breach to divide is real and is tenacious. The adamance of it is caught in the fact that the Church of Uganda cut relations with the diocese of New Hampshire following the consecration of the gay bishop.

The *New York Times* records the pained reactions of bloggers on both sides of the gay question. "The conservatives call their liberal colleagues 'Episcopagans,' apostates and revisionists, and refer to themselves as the 'guardians of the faith.' Liberal bloggers hurl epithets like 'ChristiaNazis' and 'Neocon Anglicans.'"

Such language reminds outsiders that the quarrel is partly procedural—who has the right to stipulate rules of admission?

But it is not only procedural, and that is why this issue is so threatening to so many in the Anglican Communion. "Last week," the *Times* reports, "Sarah Hey, a blogger in South Carolina who is popular with conservatives, wrote of a schism: 'Permanent. Enduring. Wide. I can't wait.' In her next post, she added: 'And Broad. And Deep. And Bitter. And Expensive. And public.'"

It is simply wrong automatically to relegate Ms. Hey to the shrill and uncaring ranks of homophobes. Those who seek to understand what is going on have to acknowledge that acts of discrimination are not always explained by raw prejudice. The deeply felt Christian proposition that the natural union is heterosexual, and that conventions should reflect this, cannot be dismissed as easily as by asserting that unions between members of the same sex ought to be equivalent in the law, let alone in religious orders.

Religion is not entirely a matter of what is natural. The Christian religion begins by affirming some unnatural propositions, among them the divinity of Christ. But it is to be expected that some men and women, driven by conscience and fidelity, should resist, day by day, the attenuation of the faith. There are churchmen who believe that to bring in new, secular crucibles in which to reshape religion does no strategic service, and ends by diluting creedal authority.

Arthur Schlesinger, R.I.P.

NEW YORK, MARCH 2

I ALWAYS regretted that we didn't become friends, because the thousands who succeeded in doing so found friendship with Arthur Schlesinger very rewarding. For one thing, to behold him—listen to him, observe him, read him—was to coexist with a miracle of sorts.

It is an awful pity, as one reflects on it, that nature is given to endowing the wrong men with extraordinary productivity. If you laid out the published works of John Kenneth Galbraith and of Arthur Meier Schlesinger Jr., the line of books would reach from Galbraith's house in Cambridge to Schlesinger's old house in Cambridge.

A week or two back, Schlesinger acknowledged to someone that he wasn't quite on a par with his old self, his old self having been just fine until about age 86, three years ago, after which the decline began. He walked more slowly and, he said, his speech was not as fluent as usual.

Any reduction in his productivity must have been shattering to him, as to his many clients, beginning with Clio, the muse of history, which he served so diligently, beginning with his first all-star history, *The Age of Jackson*, and going up to his last book, published a couple of years ago, deploring President Bush for one thing and another.

Schlesinger wrote serious studies, of the age not only of Jackson, but also of Roosevelt and of Kennedy, for whom his enthusiasm was uncontainable. Arthur proceeded to write not one but three books on JFK, whom he venerated. He lived with the risk entailed in following so uncritically the careers of his favorites. Professor Sidney Hook dismissed one of his Kennedy books as the work of a "court historian." Schlesinger minded the derogation not at all, so much did he cherish public controversy that cast him as maintaining the walls of the fortresses that protected his idols.

He was, I record regretfully, not very deft at close-up political infighting. I say this as the survivor of a half-dozen encounters designed, by Arthur, to kill, which failed. In one of them he hurled a sarcasm, saying of me, "He has a facility for rhetoric which I envy, as well as a wit which I seek clumsily and vainly to emulate." I thought that so amusing, I copied the words exactly on the jacket of my next book as though they were a great, generous compliment. If you see what I mean about Arthur's awkwardness in combat of this kind, he actually sued me and my publisher, drawing much attention to his careless use of sarcastic praise, and, of course, to my wit.

But we kept on bumping into each other with less than mortal exchanges, and I had to endure my wife's huge affection for him, which unhappily did not quite effect a personal rapprochement. He died in New York on February 27, after being struck by a heart attack at dinner in a restaurant, and I think back on the lunch we shared after the funeral of Murray Kempton, and of the sheer jolliness of the great and productive historian when he didn't feel that his gods were being profaned.

There is no honor payable to an American historian that he did not earn. One of his books got the National Book Award *and* a Pulitzer. Meanwhile he entertained himself by writing movie criticism, and hordes of others by writing essays on every subject that interested him, including what it is in society that creates history. He was a liberal partisan, but he did not turn a blind eye to transgressions by accommodationist liberals who permitted themselves to follow the Communist Party line. He was devastating in his expulsion of them from his movement, which he served more diligently than perhaps any other human being in modern history.

Chasing the Buck

NEW YORK, MARCH 6

HARRY TRUMAN is forever remembered for having said, "The buck stops here!" This came at a high moment in confusion and recriminations during the postwar federal scandals. It isn't by any means established that President Truman bungled his responsibilities as chief executive. What he said merely reflected his time in the Army, in which there is cognitive training on responsibility based on the chain of command.

This chain is unbending, and it is, for exactly that reason, implausible. It is one thing to draw an absolutely straight line from the lowest private to the Army commander. Anyone with a handbook describing promotions can do it. If today's exercise is to plot successive promotions until you reach four-star general, why go ahead. Junior can do it without thinking. In fact, not thinking will help.

Where complications enter in is with the commander in chief, who is not in the military line of promotion, but who has authority over the armed forces. Now, the complexity of command does not shield the commander in chief from formal responsibility. If the head of Walter Reed Hospital has done a lousy job, whom do you complain to, if not the secretary of the Army, who reports in turn to the president? But remember that this is a disciplinary question. The tougher question is: Whom and what do you blame?

Millions of Americans exercise responsibilities at various levels. At home, to begin with. On the job, of course. When businessmen and businesswomen are successful, their talents are sought by organizations ranging from the local branch of the Boy Scouts up to AT&T. When an organization appoints directors, the objective is to diffuse, not to concentrate, responsibility. The theory is that good management will result when responsibility is shared.

Of course the point arrives where it can't be shared, even as the moment comes for the soldier to shoot or not to shoot.

But the eagerness to blame President Bush for the mess at Walter Reed tells us that what we are engaged in is not a healthy exercise in management. It tells us that in search of an object of political contumely, we permit ourselves to be guided by Truman's silly aphorism: The buck stops here.

The beginning of knowledge about democratic organization is that confusions will happen, and policies will be followed that superior officers did not order and are affronted by. Bush took the blame for Abu Ghraib, but who believes that he desired torture and obscene handling of the enemy? Democratic accounting permits those who disapprove of the policies being followed to single out someone in authority, resulting, e.g., in the firing of the two principal officers involved in Walter Reed and the demand for the resignation of the secretary of the Army.

Perhaps the voter is permitted to start in counting: a delinquency in January, another in February, another in March—and by the time November comes, you may be convinced that the commander in chief does not set the proper standards. It is then but only then that you resort to Trumanesque reductionisms: The soldier's shoes aren't shined; send the buck to the White House.

We have to watch for this kind of thing, especially in this season of high criticism aimed at President Bush. The majority of the American people regret that we are in Iraq. But it is not safe to say that the majority of the American people wish we could vaporize our presence in Iraq. Only Bush can, so to speak, liquidate our Iraq exposure. He is not going to do this, and we settle for heightening the criticism whenever there is sour news from Iraq, which is every day, or sour news about the administration of corollary responsibilities, like looking after our wounded.

A not-bad rule would be to repeat every day, "The buck stops with delinquent human nature." We correctly refuse to believe that Americans would intentionally fail to provide for our wounded. But our wounded were not being provided for, people are being fired and replaced, the houses of Congress are being asked for more money, and do we really need to bring in a penalty point on George Bush to feel that we've done what needed doing?

—UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

"What do you mean you don't like buffalo?"

happy warrior

MARK STEYN

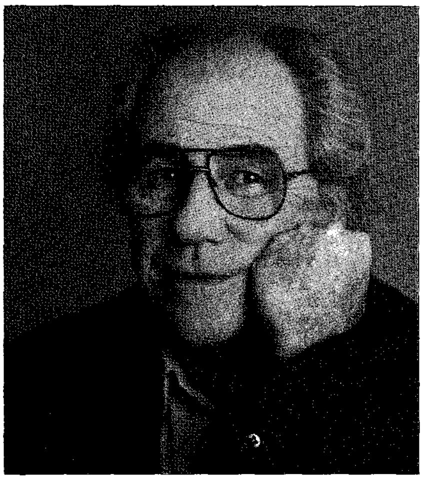
Monsieur Has a Point

THE other day, Jean Baudrillard, the leading French postmodern social theorist, died—if, indeed, death is a concept he deigns to recognize. And yes, I blush to use the words "leading French postmodern social theorist" in NATIONAL REVIEW. But oddly enough I've warmed up to the old poseur. M. Baudrillard was celebrated for the theory that man today can no longer distinguish reality. He exists instead in a hyper-reality of "simulacra" created by the media.

This line turned out to be a goldmine for him, and he made some serious money out of it. Real money, that is. Baudrillard published a book called *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, which argued just that. Rather, he wrote, what happened in 1991 was that a simulacrum of a war had been staged on CNN. This was easy to mock at the time, and a lot of folks did. Just because a French intellectual suffering from *fin-de-civilisation* ennui is an easy target is no reason not to load up the rotten fruit. Yet, in fact, M. Baudrillard's thesis holds up a lot better a decade and a half later than most.

Baudrillard began with certain impressions—the preference even of participants on the ground for viewing the war on cable TV—and quirky facts: A U.S. serviceman was statistically in more danger of dying back home than in combat in the Middle East. From this, he deduced a whole grand theory: The "allies" were not waging war but merely dropping 10,000 tons of ordnance a day as a simulacrum of war. Saddam Hussein was also engaged in a simulacrum: Inverting the American model, he offered up large numbers of his own eminently disposable citizenry in sacrifice to the non-war, but kept all the stuff he would have used in a real war—his air force, for example—safely out of sight and hidden away. The two sides rarely engaged and, as Baudrillard saw it, in the end the defeated party had not in fact been defeated and the winners had not in fact won. Therefore, no war had taken place.

The author is not denying empirical evidence per se, so much as what the evidence means. The one shameful moment when the first President Bush forgot he was fighting a CNN war and confused it with a real one was when he called on Saddam's people to rise up against the tyrant. They did so, only to find that Bush had gone back to play-warmongering on CNN and wasn't there for them. They were slaughtered en masse by the supposedly vanquished dictator.



Jean Baudrillard

P. VICTOR/MAXPPP/ZUMA

Were he a military historian rather than a Gallic poseur, Baudrillard might have formulated it slightly differently. The countdown to war began with Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and Mrs. Thatcher's advice to the president: "This is no time to go wobbly, George." But, by the time the troops went in, Mrs. Thatcher had been defenestrated from Downing Street and the Bush administration had chosen to mask wobbliness as a moral virtue. Traditionally, a nation that goes to war has war aims. But the U.S. forswore any war aims other than the restoration of the status quo ante (the return of Kuwait to its seedy princelings), preferring to prioritize coalition-building as an end in itself: The more nations that signed on, the less they signed on to.

In recoiling from real war, in assembling such overwhelming high-tech might for such attenuated goals, Washington thought it was projecting a kind of high-minded U.N. selflessness, when in fact it was communicating weakness. The reality was worse than Baudrillard's "hyper-reality." If you stage a devastating bombs-away video game on CNN and at the end the bad guy is still standing, it's not merely that "nothing has changed." If Team USA achieves a scoreless draw against the South Sandwich Islands, by definition that's a much better result for the latter than the former. In other words, the War That Did Not Take Place was perceived on the Arab street and beyond to have been won by Saddam. To be sure, an elaborate and expensive dictatorial management program was erected by the U.N.—Oil for Food, no-fly zones—but it proved to be a cash cow for him and ensured that the Americans and British spent the years before the 2003 war being berated by the Euroleft and the NGOs for wreaking ongoing humanitarian devastation on Iraq.

Whenever I bemoan the inconclusive end to the Gulf War, I receive letters from aggrieved veterans pointing out that they blew through Saddam's much vaunted Republican Guard in nothing flat. That's correct. But the reality—which Baudrillard appeared to grasp and the realpolitik realists didn't—is that war isn't a technical demonstration of superior power but about the willingness to use that power to achieve strategic ends. In that sense, the Gulf War did not take place.

On this fourth anniversary of the fall of Saddam, there will be inevitable raking over of all the many mistakes made in the spring of 2003 and the years since. But, if the media, the Slow Bleed Democrats, and the White Flag Republicans are determined to transform Iraq into a tragedy, it's important to remember it's a tragedy in two acts—and that the biggest mistake of all was made in 1991. Baudrillard's book took its title from Giraudoux's play of 1935—*The Trojan War Will Not Take Place*—and thus places desultory uncommitted high-tech cruise-you-can-lose warfare in the same category of self-delusion as idealized pacifism. Even a French postmodern social theorist is right about reality once in a while. Which is a better strike rate than many of the realists. **NR**

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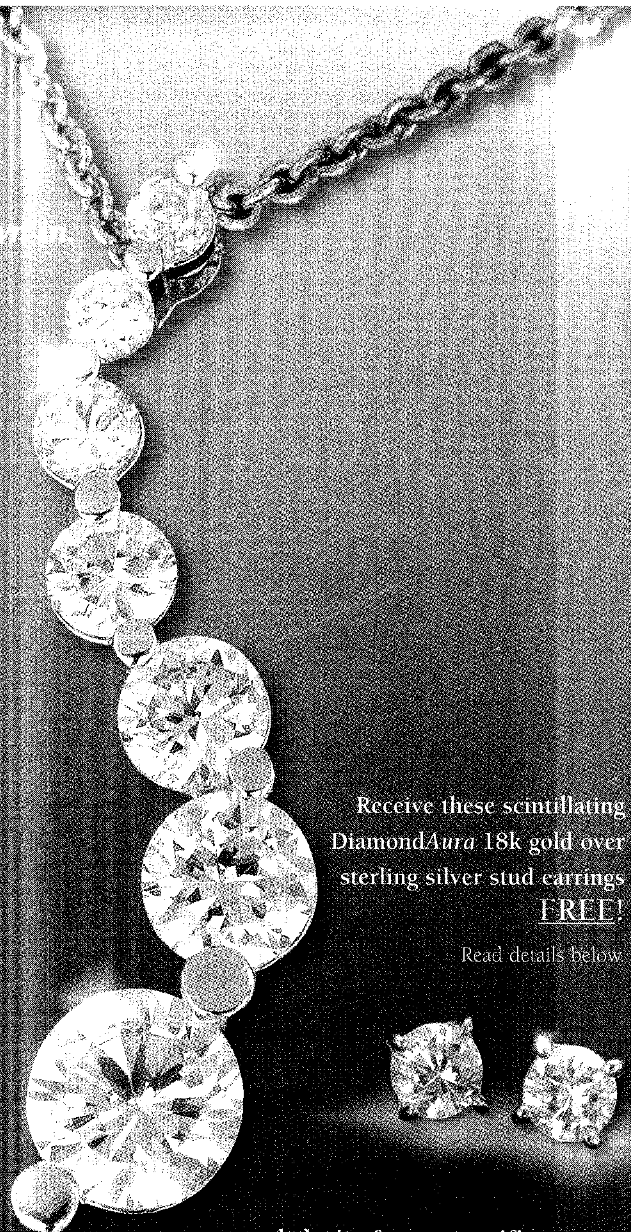

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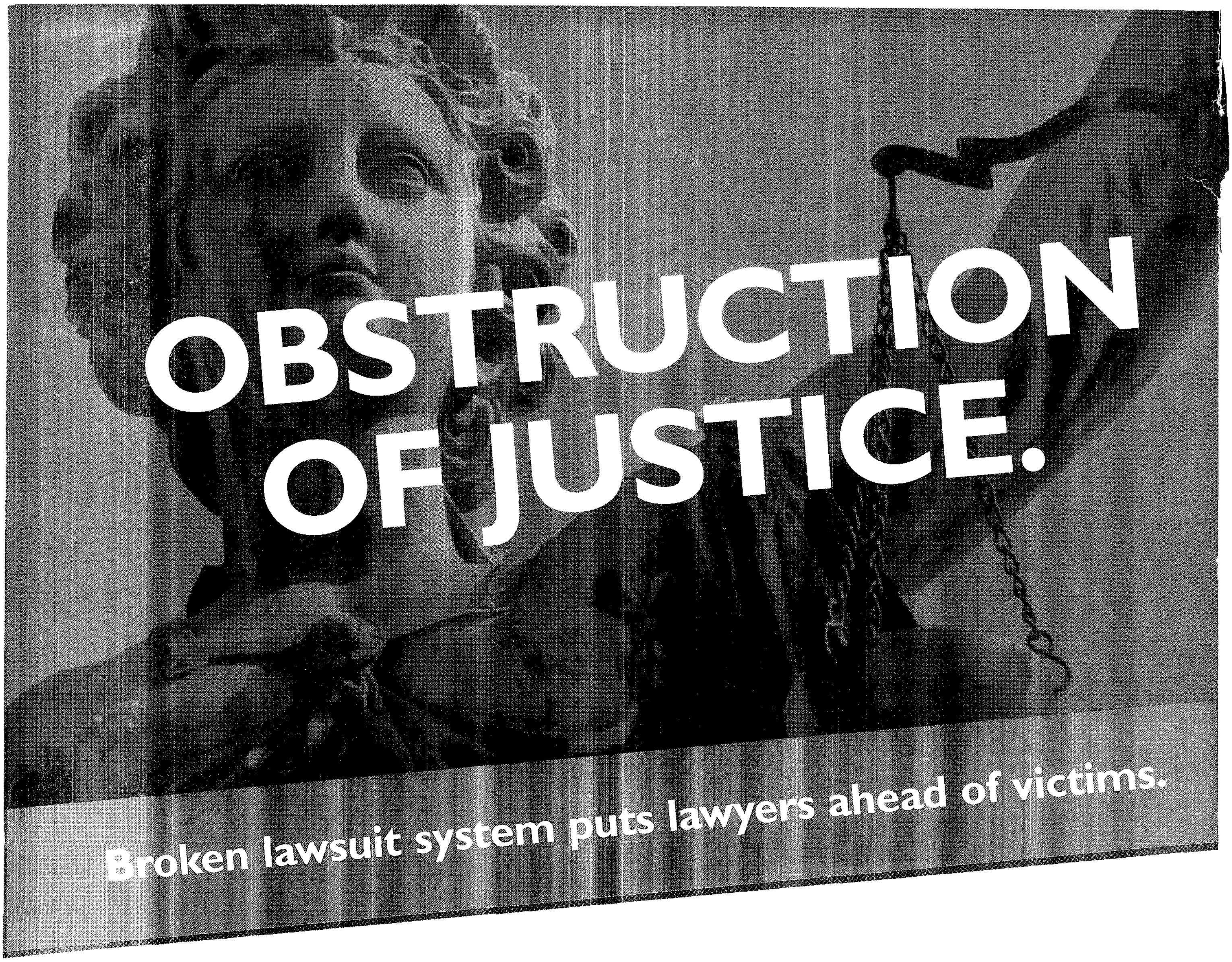
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